Kropotkin

Black Flag
BM Hurricane
London WC1N 3XX

Published, typeset and layout by the Black Flag Collective

Printed by Clydeside Press Glasgow

For a social system based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation - against state control and all forms of government and economic repression. To establish a share in the general prosperity for all – the breaking down of racial, religious, national and sex barriers – and to fight for the life of one world.

Subscription Rates

Inland and Europe:
4 issues £6
Rest of the world:
Surface: 4 issues £8
Airmail: 4 issues £12

Bulk orders to AK Press:

AK Press
PO Box 12766
Edinburgh EH8
0131 555 5165

AK America
PO Box 40862
San Francisco
CA 94140-0682, USA

Giro Account no. Black Flag
58 552 4009

e-mail:
black.flag@qnet.org.uk

editorial...

the poverty of journalism

In *The Guardian Weekend* of November 16th was the latest in Freedom's war of words against Albert Meltzer. Badly written by Richard Boston it restated many of their lies about anarchism and Albert Meltzer in particular. How can anyone call Freedom "consistently lively" unless half dead themselves? And Freedom is the only group mentioned, complete with their oft-repreated lie that it was founded in 1886 by Prince Kropotkin, rather than started before the war as Spain and the World and renamed when the current proprietor seized control of the assets. There can be no doubt it was fed to Boston by *Freedom*, he even admitted that the lie about Stuart Christie was told to him by a member of *Freedom*. Everything else anyone is doing is written out of this potted history, drawn straight from Woodcock and Marshall, for whom anarchism (pronounced dead in the 60s by Woodcock) is merely a cash cow to be milked from the ivory towers of academe. Of the barrage of protest this execrable inaccurate shit produced, the Guardian published but two, with a "proper balance" friendly to Freedom. A lengthy and detailed rebuttal of Vernon Richards' lies about Albert's role in supporting the anti-Franco resistance by Octavio Alberola, co-ordinator of that resistance in the 60s, was put in, albeit heavily cut. And Emma Goldman wrote from beyond the grave, noting how Boston wrote women out of his "history of anarchism". The Guardian's editors clearly know so little about the subject to let that one through - but that's hardly surprising. Back in the real world, our response is clear. An unofficial boycott of Freedom has long been in place. This is not on a personal basis but a political one. We don't know most of the individuals involved and apart from their lies about Albert couldn't care less about them on a personal level. But we do object to their pretending that the working class traditions of anarchism don't exist. Anarchism is drawn from those very working class traditions of Self-Organisation, Federalism, Direct Action, Solidarity and Libertarian Communism. Leaders and personalities do not lead us to it - we draw from our experience of the realities of working class life, combined with our ability to think for ourselves and follow our own ideas. Historians have long had problems with writing about anarcho-syndicalism, in particular, because there are no famous people who sat down and wrote it all out for others to follow. They tried to make Sorel fit the bill, but he didn't. The Liars and Liberals of Angel Alley try to write us off as a "minor revolutionary current", presumably as opposed to the supposed major quietist current. Anarchism will never be media friendly. Our task is to take anarchism back to its roots in working class resistance.

contents...

What about the workers?.....page 4
JSA,volunteering and workfare.....page 5
International news.....pages 6-9
NAFTA and the reconstructing of the automobile industry in North America.....page 12
Anarch-quiz/ Bradford '97.....page 15
Italian grassroots community organising.....page 16
Drugs, drug culture and the anarchist approach.....page 20
Abortion and the morality police.....page 23
Syndicalism and Anarchism by Peter Kropotkin.....page 24
Reviews
The Case against Searchlight by Larry O'Hara
They will never get us all! by Harold H. Thompson.....page28
Late News: Whatever happened to Class War?.....page29
Letters and debate.....page 30

T/SOR/49/1/3/3

liverpool dockers: still out of control

Sixteen months into their fight for reinstatement, Liverpool dockers and Women of the Waterfront have thown out Mersey Docks' "ultimate offer" and refused a postal ballot while igniting plans for a world solidarity strike and bringing it all back home to the battered trade unionists of Merseyside. The unofficial dispute remains in the hands of the sacked dockers and their stewards, outside the control of the union or any political party.

Just before Christmas, the company sat down with Transport and General Workers Union officials in front of dock stewards and after 6 hours of "negotiation" issued a written offer. It mentioned "in the region of 40 jobs (which) might be provided" in ancillary areas (excluding cargo handling) and £28,000 severance for the rest of the 329 men previously employed directly by the MDHC. For the Torside dockers whose sacking started the story in September 1995 and other non-MDHC employees dismissed for refusing to cross the Torside picket line, nothing. The "ultimate offer" was conditional on a postal ballot of the 329 to be completed by 31 December. A very similar offer was rejected 4-1 in February 1996.

A copy was circulated to every docker days before the packed weekly mass meeting, with TGWU Deputy General Secretary Jack Adams and Women of the Waterfront attending while other non-dockers were excluded. Every possible angle was freely discussed for over two hours. With less than 15 votes against, the dockers then decided to reject the offer and, separately, to decline a postal ballot.

TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris was expected to simply impose a ballot, forcibly dividing the former Mersey Docks employees from their comrades. And on New Year's Eve as the offer expired, Morris told BBC Radio Merseyside he had obtained an extension of the deadline and was seeking fresh talks while keeping the ballot option open. Again and again, Morris declared that dockers would "decide individually" on the offer.

Meanwhile, support began snowballing for an international dockers strike against casual labour, privatisation, and Mersey Docks on 20 January, with the US West Coast longshoremen (ILWU) taking the lead before Christmas. By 10 January, the dockers had received committments including:

Japan: The 40,000 strong National Council of Dockworkers Unions (Zenkoku Kowan) will stand "in solidarity with Liverpool while fighting deregulation in Japan", and hold workshop meetings on 20 Jan at all 50 ports it organises; release a press statement and write to Mersey Docks and assorted shipping companies.

Australia: In Sydney the Maritime Union of Australia plans a "big hit" on a ship with Liverpool connections.

New Zealand: NZ Seafarers Union intend action around 20 Jan.

US West Coast: all 18 ILWU ports contacted directly by Liverpool stewards are indicating support. A mass meeting in Los Angeles, the world's 3rd largest port, voted for a 24 hour stoppage on 20 Jan. All ports in Oregon intend "to hold Stop Work Meetings to coincide with independent activities by dockers in other countries." The San Francisco stewards council agreed a 24 hour stoppage; their position was to be put to longshoremen. Seattle is expected to follow suit.

Sweden: The Hamnarbetarforbundet told employers in Gothenburg, Stockholm, Malmo, and Helsinborg they will boycott all ACL and CAST cargo on 21 Jan.

Denmark: Mass meetings will be held on 20 Jan in Arhus, Copenhagen, and Odense. Last September, similar mass meetings decided to go home for the day.

Holland: A message of support re 20 Jan has been received from the OVB, and the FNV (the main union) has asked Liverpool for a list of ships and shipping companies due in Rotterdam that week.

Germany: Unconfirmed reports that the OTV rank and file dockers in Bremerhaven and Hamburg intend a day's stoppage.

The dockers have also heard from Blackout Books and the Workers Solidarity Alliance in New York, who plan various pickets.

As we go to press, unions in Canada, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Cyprus are considering the position.

The International Transportworkers Federation (ITF), which last year told affiliated unions not to take action in support of the unofficial dispute, shifted gear. A letter from their General Secretary on 10 January asked "all ITF dockworkers affiliates:

1) To take whatever steps are open to you, including public demonstrations and, if possible, direct action aimed at ships currently using the port facilities in Liverpool affected by the dispute during the week commencing 20 January;

2) To send further messages to the management and to the shop stewards indicating that the action is taken in support of the successful conclusion of the negotiating process already under way."

The day before the ITF move, the TGWU Finance & General Purposes Committee decided not to impose the secret ballot demanded by Mersey Docks. Union officials may have sensed a possible fracture spreading through the TGWU, if sacked dockers in an unofficial dispute were forced to hold an official secret ballot at this point. That danger remains for the future.

Potential industrial action on Merseyside and the North West to complement the growing international boycott was discussed by a meeting of 60 shop stewards from 16 companies held on 11 Jan.

Delegates included contingents from Fords, Vauxhalls, Road Transport drivers, AC Delco, Post Office, Local Authority, and Further Education.

Since the first weeks of the Lockout, dockers have made various impassioned appeals for local industrial action. But except for tugboatmen who have repeatedly delayed ships, the response has been limited to a partial strike on May 1, mainly by local government staff, and isolated action by AEU members in an engineering factory. They blame the climate of economic fear for inhibiting action at home.

Judging by this recent meeting, however, the local mood is now moving towards isolating Mersey Docks whether by shifting contracts to other ports, refusing to handle individual cargo, or withholding services as well as supporting the mass picket on 20th January.

Workplace collections picked up when the recent Ken Loach documentary *The Flickering Flame* was screened on BBC2 just before Christmas. The closing sequence, where a retired docker decries the stream of trade unionists driving through the picket lines as if their own jobs were secure, had clearly hit home.

Dockers' international coordinator Terry Teague outlined the worldwide surge for 20 January and pointed out that much cargo being boycotted abroad, such as motor vehicle components and feedstuffs, actually originates in the North West.

The assembled stewards voted unanimously to "confirm their determination to impose a physical boycott upon any raw

what about the workers?

SUCH ORGANISATIONAL structures as exist for the protection of people are still, in the main, old fashioned trade unions. Years ago in the 1970s, under a Labour administration, trade union leaders took a role in high level political decision making. But at shop floor level there was a fear that trade unions were being integrated into management with the clear purpose of defusing the demands of the workforce and seeking to replace class consciousness with a sort of company consciousness. A belief in one's class interest was to be replaced with a belief that one's interest as an employee was identical with the interest of the company one worked for.

The collusion of trade unions and some activists in this process clearly concerned those who took the opposite view that a boss could only enhance a company's performance (read profits), at the expense of the workforce. 'Increasing productivity' inevitably meant keeping wage levels down, forcing workers to work harder or for more hours for the same pay etc. In essence increasing productivity meant increasing exploitation, and the same people who objected to pay rises for oridnary employees, citing the need to maintain competitiveness, were the first to propose obscenely large salaries for the bosses.

It is largely due to the work of trade unionists who believe in the class struggle that the process of union integration into establishment structures was not carried further than it was. Indeed I believe that the trade unions have retained enough independence to make them continue to be worthwhile areas of activity.

The processes I have described first became significant in the 70s, but even then trade unions had not completely lost their clout. In the mid 70s I was a member of a shop steward committee in an engineering firm, which was made redundant en bloc, in total defiance of agreed redundancy criteria. This was clearly done because management regarded the shop stewards committee as an effective body acting in the interests of the workforce, and it had to be destroyed. I realise that this example does not prove my assertion of the continuing and positive class role of trade union activists in the 1970s, but it happened often enough in broadly similar ways to indicate that trade unions and their active officers were regarded as a threat by significant numbers of bosses.

A further significant factor is the perception of trade unions in the 70s as remembered twenty years on. I regard the Tory hegemony since 1979 as a period of unalloyed social and economic disaster. However I have the rare pleasure of a work colleague who has been a supporter of the Conservative party for over 20 years. Clearly most would regard such a stance as foolish, to put it mildly, but his justification that "somebody had to do something about the unions" merits some thought. I would not like to guess how far the antagonism to trade unions in the late 70s was based on a distrust of any body that became part of the state's ruling apparatus, or how far it was simply based on a dislike of bodies getting too big for their boots, assuming a role inappropriate to their proper purpose. But this anti - trade union feeling was a genuine and weighty factor in public opinion in the late 1970s.

In the post 1979 era the role and potential effectiveness of trade unions has been severely restricted and attacked by the government as deliberate policy. For politicians who espouse quite volubly the merits of freedom, this policy has seemed contradictory. I usually sum up this apparent dichotomy by observing that the Tories are certainly in favour of the right

liverpool dockers: still out of control

materials or products shipped through the Port of Liverpool to their workplaces, and on services supplied to the MDHC."

"Such actions will be co-ordinated and last until the dockers are reinstated."

"Union representatives present call upon the community of Merseyside to maintain their opposition to casual labour, privatisation and de-regulation in favour of a dignified life in industry."

"As such we remain opposed to all laws that oppress ordinary people and destroy their basic human rights."

In appealing directly for physical solidarity, the dockers have also rejected the line of such parties as the SWP who have frequently told them to force the TGWU to make the strike official, after which the union leadership would supposedly instruct members to take secondary action (an everyday occurence in official strikes, naturally). This strategy is as bankrupt as the demand that the TUC call a General Strike, and has virtually no support from dockers or their stewards.

Instead, the ideas with the deepest resonance inside the lockout are:

- the rank and file must discuss and decide everything
- the union must be returned to the control of its membership
- sacked dockers, their wives and partners, can travel the world, picket the Stock Exchange, speak to the media, produce a newspaper, use the Internet, occupy cranes, honour picket lines, call for and receive industrial solidarity, etc. In other words, they can act for themselves and get help from their class.

This perspective shines through as dockers applaud the Coordinadora (anarcho-syndicalist port workers in Spain and the Canary Islands), or recall the "Blue Union" of the 1950s and '60s, which broke from the TGWU (though no-one currently expects its revival). It is why the dockers cheered the anarchists who took the roof of Mersey Docks on 30 September and then defended them in the teeth of Bill Morris' demand that "the dockers must disassociate themselves from those who have become involved in the dispute", as he told the *Financial Times* on 1st October.

The stewards, whose varying individual political perspectives include Stalinism, Socialist Labour Party, Militant Labour, and positions further left, stand as the elected leadership retaining the confidence of a rank and file who take decisions. That is the uncontrollable strength in Liverpool.

Miasnikov

to strike. What they object to is anybody making use of this right!

In this context of government hostility to the unions, the public perception of their role has also shifted; unions are seen as having outlived their usefullness and being incapable of protecting working conditions or wages to any significant extent. However the Tory attempt to neutralise and marginalise the unions does not in itself prove that they remain serviceable and beneficial instruments of working class interest worth defending. Such a conclusion can only be decided on an analysis of their actual activity over the period under consideration.

There are two roles carried out by trade unions. The first is considered very important by union bureaucrats, is done by full time offficers, is broadly described as policy and lobbying work, and involves attendance at high powered conferences, and the preparation of enormous quantities of briefing papers and position statements. This PR work is supposed to give the impression that unions are involved in the political decision making process and are contributing towards the development of ideas in the relevant arenas.

The second role is on the job representation, defence against unacceptable actions by bosses and work towards improving pay and conditions. Many years of experience doing this sort of work has never got me any greater benefit than a buffet lunch at the boss's expense. This latter role is clearly more important to trade union members than the former. But the work done by full timers is far more highly regarded by the unions, taking up an overwhelmingly large proportion of members' subscriptions, whilst delivering barely perceptible benefits to anyone but themselves. On the job support of shop floor workers is carried out by unpaid volunteers, who can pull off good and quantifiable achievements which members value. When trouble looms at work, the shop steward is the first port of call.

Given these two distinct strands to a trade union's work, it is reasonable to ask whether an individual can do any good carrying out work within such an organisation. For the diminished number of working people currently in TU membership, that is still where they first turn when they are in difficulty with the boss or need advice about pay or conditions.

To give support to one's fellow TU members under threat from management or experiencing difficulties seems to be an unexceptional role for any anarchist. I have always regarded it as being an advantage to be an anarchist in such a situation. As such one has no week to week varying party line to pursue and one has an approach of instinctive egalitarianism which enables one to treat bosses as equals (?!). A TU member likes to see someone stand up to the boss, even more if they are too timid to do it themselves.

I believe anybody with any common sense can do this sort of work without very much strain provided they have a sensible view of what they can achieve. This activity will not cause the foundations of the state to shake. There is an obvious response to the Leninist accusation that one is limited to a "mere Trade Union consciousness" with the enquiry as to how near the overthrow of capitalism has been brought by their activities. The trade union work I describe will be most unlikely to cause upset to no more than a few individual bossses who would have hoped to continue in their arbitrary ways of running their show without problems, but who can be made more accountable and less destructive by properly conducted trade union work. Even such a slight achievment is worth going for. It will never tip the balance in favour of the oppressed. It will at best give a passing relief from unacceptable levels of exploitation to a few people at a time. Even on these terms I think it is worth doing. It is a modest aspiration for an anarchist but it does not, as far as I judge it, involve betrayal of any principles. It is a small contribution in favour of working people in the ongoing conflict betwen classes. As I like to point out, the class struggle is only fought through people like us getting out there and fighting it.

JSA, volunteering &workfare

THE JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE (JSA) is being introduced to provide a reserve army of cheap labour for the bosses. However, the government is obliged to ensure adequate provision of welfare, for the unemployed, aged and infirm, that lives up to certain international standards. The voluntary sector's role is to meet those standards with funding from certain bodies such as the National Lottery.

That wouldn't be so bad if the voluntary sector avoided being manipulated into upholding the values of the government of the day. This occurs because social and political debate is forbidden within projects because it will supposedly alienate the client group. While we would be rightly alarmed if projects were used to recruit people to political parties, to forbid debate denies our basic civil liberties. The JSA will force the poor out of any meaningful social and political debate in this area.

The government encouraged the shift from statutory towards voluntary provision of welfare both as a cost cutting exercise and to re-establish Victorian values on the 19th century philanthropic model. Workfare programmes will be introduced along with a hierarchy of volunteers. These volunteers will be initially divided between those who have free time and want to help out and those who are coerced under the threat of benefit cuts.

At this point the true volunteers will be separated and charged with supervising the coerced volunteers, who will of course be perceived as being lazy, shifty, too critical, deviant and diseased. Those with any political outlook will be placed at the very bottom, accused of agitating and endangering the future funding of the project.

One may consider this scenario far fetched, but the processes were already in place for its introduction during the early 80s with the Youth Training Scheme(YTS). In the late 80s this was replaced by Employment Training but neither were challenged effectively. Those involved in promoting YTS and ET alleged they were perfect models but if that was the case where are they now ? They were merely part of a greater plan and served only to pave the way for a passive and compliant workforce for both private employers and voluntary agencies. This can only mean a severe drop in the quality of life for many because we will no longer have organisational bodies required to both maintain and win our rights. Therefore voluntary agencies must seriously stop to consider whose agendas they may be following. The need to seek their own agendas in favour of their specific client groups who should be defining their own needs is paramount. The jargon of "needs led empowerment" should be placed deeper into reality where decision making is honestly needs led rather than being paid lip-service to. Also, we must abolish the JSA - don't adapt!

Both paid and voluntary workers should join unions (preferably anarcho-syndicalist ones) to protect their won rights and to ensure there is no abuse of the client group's rights. Unity is Strength

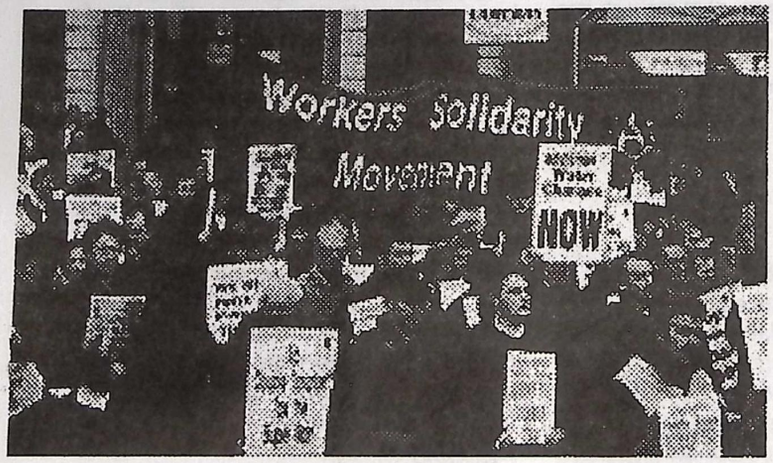
Graham Short

ireland

water charges defeated

FOR ALMOST 3 YEARS, working class people in Dublin have been fighting water charges. On 19th December 1996 the minister of the environment made a low key announcement that he had abolished water and sewerage charges throughout the country. Previously, the courts had already rebelled and adjourned cases all over Dublin, awarding costs to the non-payers who were heard on the day and in one case expenses as well to all of the 95 who turned up to defend themselves.

Anarchists from the Workers Solidarity Movement have been involved in this campaign since its inception three years ago, including the campaign secretary and another member of the co-ordinating committee. The campaign has grown in this time to 17,000 paid up householders with 80% of households eligible to pay either behind or not having paid any of the charges. This mirrors the anti-poll tax movement of 1988-92. The WSM has argued against Militant that it is only the power of the working class organising itself and taking decisions by itself which puts fear into the hearts of the misleaders of the current political system. Militant have been pushing that the campaign should support candidates in elections (guess whose?) even though other individuals have been elected on non-payment platforms and then gone on to support implementation of the charges.



The real lesson of the campaign is that we can only change things by acting ourselves and not by passively supporting one or the other 'trustworthy' politician or political party. Capitalism will only be overturned when the working-class take things over and put an end to privilege and power. The anti-water charge campaign has taken small steps right across Dublin towards rebuilding class confidence and community solidarity. It has laid the beginnings of networks and contacts and given people the confidence to break the law and take on the powers that be.

canada

1,000,000 close down toronto

IN TORONTO, a week of action against the right wing government of Ontario province culminated a mass strike. A million people stayed away from work on October 25th bringing the city to a standstill.

The action was organised by the Metro Days of Action Committee, a diverse coalition of unions, community groups and other activists. Beginning at midnight hundreds of picket lines were set up across the city. Transport workers quickly joined the strike shutting down the city's transportation system, despite a court injunction preventing this. Public sector workers closed almost all except emergency services. All construction sites, both union and non-union, were closed. Nurseries, schools and colleges were all but closed down.

The following day close to 300,000 people joined a massive demonstration and rally in the city.

The action was to protest against the Conservative government of Premier Mike Harris. Since their election in June 1995, they have pushed through a Thatcherite economic restructuring involving anti-union measures and massive cuts to welfare, education, health and other public services.

Despite the massive success of this action, some Union bosses are threatening to scab on future actions, arguing that they should focus their efforts on electing a New Democratic Party government. This is the same New Democratic Party, who were voted out after initiating the current anti-working class policies.

More days of action are promised including a possible province-wide general strike on May 1st 1997.

Source: *Industrial Worker*, Dec 1996.

france

truckers show the way

WHILE BRITISH trade unions (who represent far more members than their French counterparts) sit idly by and pray for a Labour government that no one believes will deliver anything to working class people, French truckers have won a major victory that could get other workers queuing up to take action.

After 12 days of blockades, employers and Prime Minister Alain Juppé's government were forced to concede retirement at 55 instead of 60, payment for loading, standby and compulsory rest time and a special 3,000 franc (£375) bonus. The truckers had the sort of public support the ambulance drivers had here and their victory proved that "struggle pays."

The big question in France now is who's next? This was the third time in four years that striking workers have beaten a conservative French government. In 1993, Air France workers forced the scrapping of a rescue plan for the airline involving job cuts. In 1995, transport workers led a public sector revolt which forced Juppé to withdraw a plan to streamline the railways and make public employees work longer for a full pension.

For us on the other side of La Manche, isn't it time the unions here took up direct action like their French counterparts - sod the "social chapter" - it's the example of the "les routiers" that we need to get from Europe.

south korea

general strike

THE GENERAL strike in Korea continues to involve hundreds of thousands of people, even though the Korean Congress of Trade Unions, which called it, is illegal. They are striking to demand the abolition of a law which threatens their job security. The strike, now in its third wave, has crippled hundreds of car, shipbuilding and other plants. The new law was passed in a special parliamentary session with no opposition members present. The new law makes it easier for businesses to lay off employees en masse, something unheard of in South Korea. The government had tried to buy off workers by granting greater rights to unionise, but the new rights won't take effect for several years.

The car and shipbuilding industries were hardest hit. In addition to the leading car maker Hyundai, three other major manufacturers stood idle. South Korea is the world's sixth-largest car-maker, and gets about 30 percent of the world's shipbuilding orders. Other key industries, such as semiconductors and electronics, as well as railroads and other utilities, have remained largely unaffected.

The current strike is the nation's first organised nation-wide general strike. In the late 1980s, there was a lot of spontaneous worker and student unrest. The workers have fought pitched battles with riot police and sooner or later the government are expected to storm the Myongdang cathedral base of the strike leaders. As of the 16th January, the KCTU has converted the strike to a partial one, with the warning that any attack on the cathedral will result in it becoming general again. The strikes are spreading to the public sector and "damaging the national economy" according to the Korean government. The government's strategy is to try t split the private sector KCTU whose base is in industry from the Federation of Korea Trade Unions, stronger in the public sector. As we go to press, it appears that the workers are getting somewhere - the President has agreed that the law at the heart of the dispute will be reviewed by Parliament.

australia Waterside workers and port employees in Darwin, Australia, placed a 24 hour ban on the Indonesian ship Fujar Kanguru on December 17th. This is part of the Aussie dockers protest action against the detention and trails of Indonesian union leaders Muchtar Pakpahan and Dita Sari now under way in Jakarta. The Maritime Union of Australia said there was "..no prospect of Mr. Pakpahan or Ms Sari receiving a fair trial." The two union leaders face charges of subversion, which in Indonesia carry the death penalty. Their crime has been to build and lead independent unions in a country where only government-controlled unions are legal.

finland Dec 12th is Finnish Independence day and every year there is big upper class party at Presidential Palace in Helsinki where all members of political, economical and cultural elite are invited. This year anarchosyndicalist group Syndicalist Action organised a demonstration against this big party which is paid for by the state. The protest was against new welfare cuts. Five people were arrested but released later on same day after police gave them small fines. To sum it up: Demo was OK, next year we make it big time!

israel

and another general strike

DESPITE MASSIVE media coverage of the peace process in December 1996, there was no media mention of the gerneral strike which began with the arrest of Histadrut trade union department head Shlomo Shani. Shani had attended a rally of striking chemical workers in Haifa, but this was only the straw that broke the camel's back, as Israeli workers have had enough of neo-liberal policies. The right wing Netanyahu government has increased taxes on working people and cut social welfare.

The Histadrut union used to be part of the ruling Labor Party. Now it is trying to find a new role for itself and called out 400,000 workers to quickly win a huge vistory when the Knesset voted to reject Netanyahu's budget.

The union is now, according to a local commentator, on the way to becoming an ordinary reformist trade union, though it still does not work for Palestinaians and guest workers in Israel.

australia On Monday the 9th of December a group of people picketted police headquarters in Brisbane, the capital of the australian state of Queensland, in protest at a police attack on the funeral of an aboriginal elder the week before. The funeral, which took place the previous Tuesday at Woorabinda, an aboriginal community in central Queensland, was disrupted when about thirty police moved in to arrest over three hundred people who had outstanding warrants.

brazil

anarchists murdered

ON OCTOBER 23rd, in Salvador, Bahia State, Brazil, two young anarchists were badly beaten and shot to death. They were members of a rock band and well-know on the local libertarian scene. Osmundo Moreira da Silva Filho and Alexandro Jose Novaes Conceicao were killed by members of the Military Police, led by corporal Gidi Santos Barreto. After the crime, the police planted a gun in one of the victim's hands to make it seem like they were resisting arrest. The local paper *Bahia Hoje*, covered the story on October 26th. Anarchist groups and friends of those murdered have organized several actions to denounce what happened and to demand punishment for the criminals. This included a very well attended demostration in Salvador on November 6th. Our Brazilian comrades are asking for protests about this brutal murder and to demand that justice be done to these police killers.

Send messages to: Comisao de Dereitos Humanos da Assemblea Legislativa da Bahia, Fax (071) 371.0883; and e-mail Ministerio da Justica do Brasil webmaster@ml.gov.br

belorus

anarchists arrested

ON OCTOBER 19th, 8 anarchists were arrested in Minsk, the capital of Belorus.

The arrests followed a demonstration against the authoritarian Lukashenko regime. Lukashenko is attempting to run an old style communist dictatorship, whilst at the same time presenting a friendly image to the West. In the Spring of last year, he had demonstrators brutally beaten up in front of the world's press. Since then, he has dreamed up a "democratic" referendum to boost his image abroad. He figures he can always fix it even if he loses. Meanwhile, he continues to harass and arrest opponents, but not in public.

In October, Lukashenko had had a stand-off with parliament and rumours of a coup were circulating. Not to miss the opportunity, anarchists from Russia and Ukriane joined Belorussians in a peaceful rally and march. Conscious of Western media presence, the massed police and troops were peacful and co-operative throughout the demonstration. After the demonstration, people were arrested in small isolated groups and at a meeting of the Belarussian Anarchist Federation.

The good news is that, following international pressure, all our comrades were released after only a few days. Our comrades promise to continue the campaign against Lukashenko.

Further information from: Laure Akai at cube@glas.apc.org or P.O. Box 500, Moscow 107061 Internet: http://www.dorsai.org/~agony/russia.html

usa

rise above

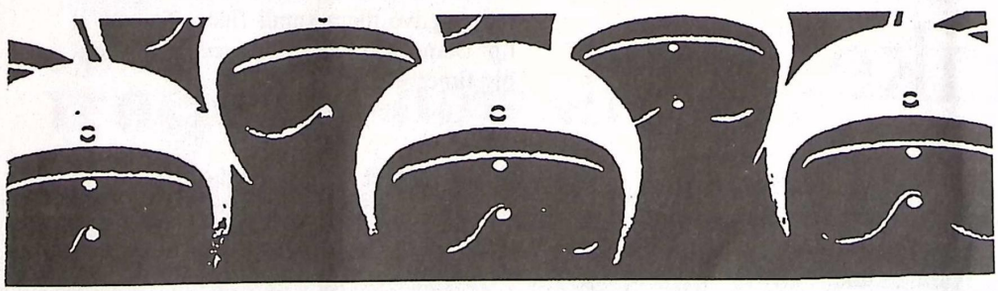
IN MAY '96 a photo-copied magazine called *Rise Above* was put out in the town of Morrow, Georgia. Most of its contents were excerpts from other anarchist publications, quotes from anti-authoritarian activists, authors and bands.

On July 27th an explosion went off at the Centennial Olympic park in Atlanta, killing two and wounding others. A few days later Jason Moreland (the editor of *Rise Above*) was informed that the police would like to 'talk with him about his publication.' At the police station he was taken into custody - his mother fainted. Jason was charged with advocating the overthrow of the Government of Georgia (O.C.G.A. 16-11-4), because of an (incorrect) recipe for making moltov cocktails and a tiny graphic that depicted a person throwing a molotov at something the police felt resembled the capital building of Georgia.

Since his arrest, Jason has been hindered in his political activities. Officer Peabody (who began the *Rise Above* investigation) has been spreading rumors about "those punks from *Rise Above*." The GBI has been asking to talk to Jason about the bombing at the Centennial Park. It is the sad truth that the state of Georgia is prepared to send Jason to jail for 20 years for a tiny graphic in his publication. The American Civil Liberties Union has taken up his defense. His supporters are asking for you to write the District Attorney demanding that all charges against Jason P. Moreland be dropped as these proceedings directly violate his constitutional rights.

Contact: DA Robert E. Keller Clayton County District Attorney 200 Annex, Clayton County Courthouse Jonesboro, Georgia 30236

If you would like to contact Jason write to: Circle A Magazine c/o Ignatz PO Box 80967 Chamblee, Ga 30366



anti-cop day

THE SWISS group 'Le Drapeau Noir' has initiated a world-wide "International Day Against Police Brutality" on Saturday March 15th, 1997,. They say in their call for the International Day, "We are tired of the police brutality. No more beatings! No more racism! No more "mistakes"! It's time to do something, to support those who have been hurt, to denounce those who - being protected by a badge and uniform - commit crimes, to show we won't stand it anymore.

They call for demonstrations, teach-ins, marches, throughout the world. Responses have already come from groups in France, Canada and the US.

If you have access, their web sites are: in english:http://www.mygale.org/06/zebwis/cops.htm en francais:http://www.mygale.org/06/zebwis/flics.htm

news from Greece

EARLY IN SEPTEMBER PASOK (the socialist party) won a snap election in the face of deep hostility to all politicians. In some rural areas, for example near Messolongi in the West, there was widespread and public abstention. Voting is compulsory but disgust with the government and a refusal to vote for any opposition parties has since resulted in the resistance that we saw in December. Farmers blocked the national highways and railways for three weeks. The government were too scared to deploy police or the conscript army and riot squads remained only a threat. Meanwhile workers in the state sector also went on strike. Many schools particularly in Athens were occupied. This is the widest opposition to economic attacks on ordinary working class people for years.

The socialist party, as the government, is unable to exert much influence. The KKE (communist party), still a force, is determined to shut down any radical independent opposition to the government. They dont have the guns and the army that their hero Milosevic does but they do have their thugs with a reputation for violence whether against anarchist troublemakers in the Building Union or Albanian refugees in Athens. After threats against anarchists last May Day the KKE joined with riot police to prevent a repeat of the 1995 occupation of the Polytechnic at the Nov 17th anniversary demonstrations. This has gone on long enough and since then KKE premises in Piraeus, Illioupoli and Ano Liosia have been molotoved and the Athens office of the KKE-controlled Builders union bombed. This may seem a bit excessive to those who adhere to some sort of optimistic "popular front" mentality, but as they say, those who fail to learn from history.....

Anarchist activity has not been confined to a war with the commies. Police and drug dealers in Exarhia have been attacked. Banks have been firebombed and news media continue to be targeted. Prison uprisings and hunger strikes have taken place in Athens, Crete and Larissa. Gypsies are hitting back at police racism and murder. After a traffic cop shot and killed A. Murati at a road block in central Greece Gypsies marched in Athens and attacked a police car.

After a hot start to the winter @News in Athens say "The coming days will not be days of submission, they will be days of uprising."

@News PO Box 30557,
Athens 10033 ,Greece

resisting gentrification

VILLA VARVARA is a squatted house in Thessaloniki. Occupied since January 1994, it is a social and political centre. Punk and Rembetika concerts are held in the square outside, along with political meetings and video nights and shadow puppetry. The building is an old Turkish house, recently bought by the local council. 1997 sees Thessaloniki as the European "Cultural Capital". Not surprisingly this means demolition of old houses, wider roads and an increase in the cost of living forcing ordinary people out from the centre. All so that art tossers, media scum and property developers can make a fast buck at our expense. The building was chosen by the squatters deliberately to "open up a dialogue against the Cultural Capital" and local support has made the developers think twice about evicting. Resistance has included a molotov attack on cops at the offices of the "international Exhibition of Thessaloniki" on November 17th 1996 and a solidarity march in Athens. "We realise they will force us out. So were planning that day from now." Villa Varvara , PO Box 50868, 54014 Thessaloniki. Info on Villa Varvara ripped off from *No World Order*, PO Box 199, East brunswick, 3057, Melbourne, Australia.

greek hunger-striker released

SPYROS DAPERGOLAS,a Greek anarchist charged with bank robbery has been released from jail on health reasons. He has been on hunger strike since November 9th.

He'll be staying in hospital for a few days, until his health gets better. Comrades have visited him and reported that he's in a very good mood, although of course totally exhausted. We are relieved now that it all turned out well, because it was a very hard situation.

Spyros was sent to hospital two weeks ago but he was taken back to prison within a couple of days as he refused to take serum. This put his health in additional risk. He was later taken to another hospital when his health became critical. The court decision had been postponed - deliberately in our opinion - as they were probably expecting him to give up, as his condition was so bad. Media coverage of his case was almost nill. It was hardly mentioned by some newspapers. The fact that he was charged with attempted bank robbery

didn't help. It's also possible that it was thought that he was 'cheating' on his hunger strike. Being a young and athletic person, Spyros has lasted for quite a long time.

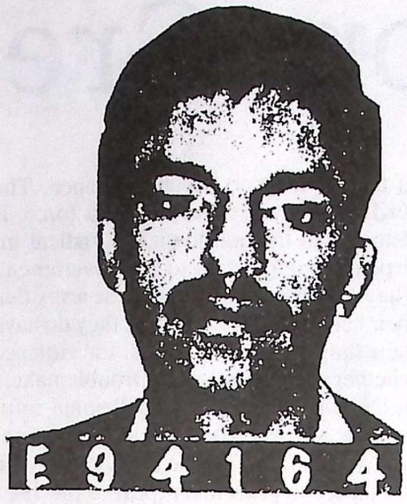
All this changed when his father went to hospital carrying a hidden video camera and shot a video of Spyros, who looked like a living skeleton. Then he took the video to a major TV station. They showed it in their news broadcast, everyone was shocked and there was considerable pressure to the ministry of justice to set him free. Spyros' determination has won. We would like to thank everyone for your interest and support.

ALPHA Anarchist Weekly
P.O. BOX 31809
100 35 ATHENS
GREECE

e - mail: alfanarc@compulink.gr

Satpal Ram

victim of rascism



ON 16th NOVEMBER 1986, Satpal Ram went for a meal at the Sky Blue Restaurant, Lozells, Birmingham. He was attacked by a group of six white people who threw plates and glasses at him, one of them stabbing him in the face with a broken glass. After being stabbed twice Satpal took out a small knife (which he used at work to open packages) and tried to warn off his attacker. His attacker went at Satpal again and bleeding and in fear of his life he stabbed him in self defence. The attacker died after refusing medical treatment.

At Satpal's trial, most of the prosecution evidence came from the group that attacked him and witness statements taken by the police from the Bengali speaking staff, were later disowned by them. Satpal's defence of self-defence was changed by his barrister at their only meeting (of forty minutes) shortly before the trial. Vital evidence from defence witnesses was not understood by the all white jury as no interpreter was provided. The judge said that he would interpret, despite the fact that he could not speak a word of Bengali!

This farce of a trial meant that Satpal was found guilty of murder, without the jury even considering if his actions were in self-defence. And at his appeal on the 24th November 1995 the judges still only looked at the evidence given by the five others who took part in the attack. At the moment Satpal is in segregation and he is moved every 28 days to another prison. He has been attacked several times by screws, going on hunger strike, after being beaten and racially abused in Full Sutton prison. Satpal continues to campaign to prove his innocence and refuses to be silenced.

Recently on Friday the 22nd November Satpal was again attacked by a screw called Hammond in Brixton prison. This attack took place after a visit from a supporter, during which the screw insulted her child and Satpal protested - he was then taken away and given a beating. A picket of Brixton prison was immediately organised for Monday 25th, with supporters coming down from Birmingham. The picket attracted some local press and importantly made the screws aware that they can't just beat someone up in the privacy of their sadistic little prison regime without some kind of come-back. After giving out a load of leaflets highlighting Satpal's plight, the loud and vocal picket moved on to the visitors centre of the prison (at the end of visiting time so as not to disrupt other prisoners visits) where the embarrassed screws ran around in a flap, and then to the back of the prison to let the prisoners know something was going on.

It seems likely that the attack was timed to purposely discredit Satpal and ruin his attempts to be moved to the midlands prison HMP Gartree, where he would be closer to his family . He has been 'ghosted' in segregation from prison to prison since March following an assault on him by prison officers in Long Lartin. More recently Satpal had been moved out of segregation and taken off continuous assessment, his behaviour giving 'no cause for concern', and he was promised a move to Gartree.

But as is standard if a prisoner is assaulted they end up being disciplined and branded a trouble-maker. This is just one more incident in Satpal's ten year history of injustice and brutal victimisation at the hands of the British legal system.

The fight to free Satpal continues! Messages of support can be sent to; Satpal Ram E94164 Though since he is often moved without warning he can be contacted via; Birmingham Prisoner Solidarity, PO Box 3241, Saltley, Birmingham B8 3DP and Free Satpal Campaign, c/o 101. Villa RD, Handsworth, Birmingham, B191 nh, phone-0121 507 1618.

John Perotti fights on

JOHN PEROTTI, jailhouse lawyer and prison activist, is back in Lucasville, scene of his most bitter struggles. He is suffering constant harassment and spells in the hole. He has recently got back into the general prison population after a rules infraction due to a drugs bust. He appealed it and it was overturned. The warden admits that the spate of drugs bust relied on doubtful evidence and were pushed through to make up numbers to secure funding for a Drugs Programme.

At the moment John is involved in his appeal against his 12-15 year conviction for the stabbing in the J1 super max in Lucasville. This is a long and expensive process. His work on smaller actions, for himself and others , continues as does his involvement in the campaign against Ohios first custom made Control Unit.

Johns spirits are good but as always contact with the outside is fundamental. Financial support for postage, printing and phone bills is also needed.

Write to : John Perotti #167712, SOCF, PO BOX 45699, LUCASVILLE, OHIO 45699, USA.

For more information, or a copy of *Down to the Wire* his own story, write to John Perotti Defence Fund, c/o 29 Sterlochy Street, Findochty, Buckie, Banffshire, AB56, Scotland.

Send £3 for the book plus something for postage.

Simon Sunderland Released

SIMON SUNDERLAND, who had been sentenced to five years for graffitti, was released on appeal in November last year. The judge ruled that the original sentence had been excessive. However, he did not question the decision to imprison a young man for decorating a derelict building due for demolition! Instead he said he felt Simon "had learned his lesson", and reduced the sentence allowing Simon's immediate release.

the death of Dudley George

ON THE NIGHT of September 6, 1995, the Ontario Provincial Police opened fire on a peaceful occupation of Ipperwash Provincial Park by the Stoney Point People. When the police pulled out of the park, many people had been beaten, one youth had been shot and wounded and Dudley George was fatally injured by a bullet in his chest. Dudley George was a member of the Aazhoodenaang Enjibaajig, the Stoney Point People. In 1942 the Canadian government invoked the War Measures Act and forced the Stoney Point People from their unceded territory, set aside by treaties in 1825 and 1827. Since the end of WWII the Stoney Point People have struggled to have their land returned.

Stoney Pointers Return Home

In 1990 the Stoney Pointers began moving home when Daniel R. George, Sr. was buried in the sacred Aazhoodena burial grounds. In 1993 they moved back onto the firing ranges and lived in makeshift dwellings - small trailers and tents. The occupation of Ipperwash Park was part of the struggle to have the Stoney Point burial grounds and territory returned. On September 14, 1995, eight days after Dudley George was killed the federal government released documents indicating that there was an Aboriginal burial ground in the provincial park. Despite the federal government's recognition that the land should be returned to its original owners the provincial government has consistently criminalized the Stoney Point people. Over 100 charges have been laid by the police since 1993.

On Monday October 21, 1996, the trial against 23 people began in Sarnia. The Crown released a memorandum stating that 43 charges would be withdrawn because "the accused have raised the defence of colour of right on the basis that there is a Chippewa burial ground within Ipperwash Provincial Park." Five members of Stoney Point First Nation still face over 20 charges. Their next court appearance will be a pre-trial on December 11th.

The OPP Murder of Dudley George

After a 10 month investigation the Special Investigations Unit released its report on the shooting death of Dudley George on July 23, 1996. As a result of the report OPP officer Kenneth Deane was charged with criminal negligence causing death. Deane was second-in-command of the Tactics and Rescue Unit operation at Ipperwash Provincial Park. His trial begins on April 1st, 1997, but according to Pierre George, Dudley George's brother the charge against Deane is "only a stalling tactic".

Urgent Appeal for Stoney Point Legal Fund

The Stoney Point People urgently require funds for travelling expenses from Toronto to Sarnia for the lawyers who are representing the five Stoney Pointers still charged with various criminal offences.

Contributions can be made to: The Stoney Point Legal Fund Toronto Dominion Bank Transit #36242 Account #522

Send Letters & Faxes to: Jean Chretien Prime Minister, Langevin Block 80 Wellington Floor 2 Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6 phone: 613-992-4211 Fax: 613-941-6900

- Ask the government to honour the 1827 Treaty and to recognize the Stoney Point People's right to their land.
- Demand that telephones be installed immediately.
- Demand an official inquiry into the OPP murder of Dudley George.

For More Information:

Marcia Simon RR#2, Forest, ON N0N 1J0 phone: 519 786-4052 fax: 519-786-6642

defend Brian Higgins campaign

Some of our readers will remember the feature on the Southwark 2 in BF207. The latest on the 2 building workers' cases is that Terry Mason is being backed by his union (EPIU) for an industrial tribunal. John Jones didn't get the backing of UCATT (arguably Britain's most corrupt union, and a strong contender for least effective) so he is taking his case via the local law centre. The UCATT full timer for the area, Dominic Hehir, was quoted in the Irish Post about another industrial tribunal(IT) case. Brian Higgins, secretary of the Building Worker rank and file group and of Northampton UCATT branch wrote to the Irish Post asking why he hadn't done the same for John Jones. Was his pending election anything to do with it? (the successful IT case was actually won by another full time official). Almost immediately Brian Higgins received a letter from UCATT connected solicitors Christian Fisher on behalf of Hehir. Referring to the letter, some BWG leaflets and Brian Higgins pamphlet *Rank and File or Broad Left? - Democracy versus Bureaucracy* (reviewed in BF208) the solicitor's letter stated "these publications have caused considerable loss and damage to our client" and went on to demand costs and damages with the threat of legal action. This attempt to gag a principled opponent of the UCATT bureaucracy by a full time official is a disgrace and breaks all standards of behaviour within the labour movement. If Hehir disagrees with Brian Higgins he should say so within the labour movement, not in the bosses courts. There is a further question to be raised apart from Hehirs motives - where is he getting the money? Litigation is not cheap and a full time officials wages couldn't cover it, so where is the money coming from? If Hehir's action is successful it threatens our very right to criticise the bureaucrats. The timing of this attack is also suspect - the BWG were about to launch a major health and safety initiative in the industry, based on solidarity and direct action. For more info contact the Brian Higgins Defence Campaign, c/o Colin Roach Centre, 56 Clarence Rd London E5 8SW tel 0181-5337111. We particularly urge any of our readers in UCATT to take up this case through their union branches.

nafta

auto restructuring and mexico's maquiladora zone

This article was sent to us by comrades in North America, and details how NAFTA is part of a broader agenda by global capitalism to slice up the world and make more profits. It puts telling arguments as to why workers in the north should be in solidarity with those in the south - after all, whose wages are we going to be equalised to by this "free market"? The author is a member of the Candian Autoworkers Union, the leading private sector union in Canada with a good tradition of internationalism. As a side point, it's worth noting that the CAW has just won agreements from the US Big Three car makers not to contract out production away from core plants. An insight into the CAW can be given by the union's leader, Buzz Hargrave, saying "If you fight, you can win," and "You can't win if you don't challenge managements' rights." It's hard to imagine John Monks or Bill Morris challenging management's rights, or even fighting to win or even fighting. The deal between the union and GM was reached only after a three-week strike but deals were negotiated with Ford and Chrysler. It's now expected that limits to a corporation's ability to outsource work will now be a key demand by other unions across the country as companies continue to shed workers. Globalisation and the neo-liberal economic policies which go with it is the major problem facing the international workers movement today. We will continue to examine these themes in future issues of *Black Flag*.

THE NORTH AMERICAN Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is a trilateral treaty designed to transform the North American continent into a single economic zone. It will facilitate the realisation of global economic order that will further entrench an increasingly unhindered global, market based economic system; and further erode, if not preclude, public policy involving significant state intervention in this economic system.

NAFTA's origins can be traced back to the Reagan /Bush "Enterprise for the Americas" initiative which envisioned the creation of a free trade zone throughout the entire western hemisphere, including the Caribbean basin, Central and South America. NAFTA constituted the next logical step towards that end following the 1988 Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The NAFTA treaty was signed on August 12 1992 and began to go into effect on January 1st 1994. Superficial and largely ineffective side agreements on labour and environmental issues were also signed and implemented.

To properly understand the significance of NAFTA, it is vital to view it as a means to facilitate a sweeping multi-faceted or multi-tiered process of corporate restructuring within the context of the global capitalist economic system. This is particularly apparent with corporate restructuring in the auto industry throughout North America since the early 1990s. This restructuring has been marked by the widespread implementation of the lean or Toyota production system; the proliferation of non-union, Japanese transplants employing lean production methods; successive waves of plant closures by parts manufacturers and the US Big Three car manufacturers; and the growth of an enormous, export-oriented Mexican car and parts industry which also underwent major corporate restructuring during this period.

Content Rules

The two free trade agreements changed vehicle content rules. The 1988 FTA ended the 1965 Canada-US Auto Pact's requirement for a 60% Canadian content in vehicles (in Canada) and replaced it with a 50% North American requirement, with North American defined as US and Canada. NAFTA raised the North American content to 62.5% but redefined North American to include Mexico.

These changes made it possible for corporations such as General Motors (GM) to relocate as much of their production wherever they wished in any of the three NAFTA countries without being penalised by tariffs. By giving corporations this unprecedented degree of capital mobility, NAFTA also made it increasingly possible for them to restructure their operations as they saw fit and to engage in corporate whipsawing.

Whipsawing is a practice in which corporations draw workers from different plants into defacto bidding wars by competing with each other for work. In these bidding wars those plants with local unions that accept what leading North American auto executives commonly refer to as "competitive agreements" stand the best chance of either retaining existing work or acquiring new work. These are also called Modern Operating Agreements or Living Agreements (Living agreements can be re-opened at any time with the consent of both parties). Significantly, the most competitive agreements are those with the most contract concessions and in which only the union surrenders its rights.

The car corporations' desire for "competitive agreements" highlights how the lean system of production fits into this scenario. Acceptance of the Toyota or lean system and the contract concessions that go with it are the principal criteria used to determine whether particular plants or operations will continue to operate and / or attract new work. The lean system means continuous restructuring of work processes and specific work operations in pursuit of "continuous improvement" and the corporate objective of eliminating "waste". It specifically involves restructuring focused on the shop floor and at the plant level, with the goals of maximising output with minimal manpower and "rightsizing" or downsizing the workforce (corporate speak for sacking workers).

Corporate whipsawing in the car and auto parts industries enables the car corporations to accelerate the drive to lean production as fully as possible throughout their organisations. This shows that there is a direct and complementary rela-

tionship between lean's implementation; phenomena such as the waves of plant closures throughout North America over the past 15 to 20 years(ie GM's announcement in 1991 that it would close 21 plants and eliminate 74,000 jobs) and the implementation of free trade agreements such as NAFTA consciously crafted to facilitate this restructuring of corporations to make them more competitive in the increasingly global economic system.

Understanding the relationship between these things is essential to understanding what has caused the dramatic decline of the United Autoworkers (UAW) union in the US. In 1979 UAW membership stood at about 1.5 million ; now it is only slightly more than half that number. Furthermore the UAW's pitiful decline has been a major cause of the decline of the US labour movement. Today only about 9% of private sector workers belong to a union.

Mexico Factors In

Mexico has factored into this situation principally because the implementation of NAFTA allowed car and auto parts companies to locate as much production as they want in any of the countries that signed the treaty. To consider what this has already meant in very stark terms, reflect on the following statistics:

•In 1986 20,500 vehicles were exported northward from Mexico
•In 1995 the US Big Three alone exported 385,000 cars and 168,000 trucks northward from Mexico, while Nissan and Volkswagen exported 225,000 northward, out of a total of 778,000 vehicles from Mexico. (38 times the 1986 level)
•In 1992, the year NAFTA was signed, auto parts companies (including GM & Ford subsidiaries) exported US$6.4 billion worth of parts northward from Mexico
•In 1995, the figure rose to US$9.5 billion.
•In the same period, the number of auto parts plants based in Mexico rose form 192 to 210 and the number of workers employed from 156,000 to 210,000.

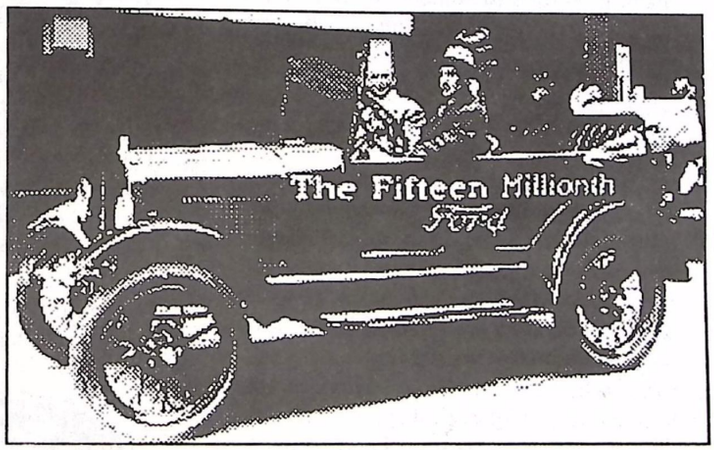
Approximately 450,000 Mexican workers are now employed in the auto industry, which now accounts for 21% of Mexico's manufacturing exports.

In 1981 GM employed a Mexican workforce of 7,000. Today it employs about 75,000 in 54 facilities. Furthermore if GM's Mexican operations were a single corporation, it would be the 135th largest in the world. Such developments leave no doubt that GM dramatically expanded the its Mexican operations both before and after NAFTA. In the meantime GM reduced its Canadian workforce by more than one third, from about 40,000 to about 26,000.

In view of these things it is essential to consider the situation of both automotive workers in Mexico and Mexican workers in general, and to see that they face horrendous problems of their own.

The principal problems faced by Mexico's workers are the low wages they are paid and the poor conditions they live in. Indeed Mexican workers' wages generally range from as little as US$4 per day to $1.25 per hour. The latter is the rate paid to workers in the US Big Three's assembly operations in Mexico. The particular problems faced by Mexican workers in the industry reveal the very same forces that have eroded the gains made by their US and Canadian counterparts since the 1930s.

An article headlined "Detroit South" in *Business Week* (March 16th 1992 edition) stated that, "In Detroit's view, Mexico's young workforce adapts more quickly to new industrial regimes than entrenched workers in the Rust Belt," and went on to say that this workforce is "amenable to the manufacturing revolution." Simply stated, Business Week was reporting that Detroit believed Mexican autoworkers were more adaptable to the lean system than traditional US blue collar workers.



To further appreciate this, it is only necessary to draw on a brilliant article by Kevin J.Middlebrook entitled "The Politics of Industrial Restructuring: Transnational Firms Search for Flexible Production in the Mexican Automobile Industry", which appeared in Comparative Politics in April 1991. It perceptively starts from the premise that "restructuring in the auto industry is fundamentally a global process" and emphasises that the shift to the construction of export-oriented automotive manufacturing facilities in central and northern Mexico has coincided with efforts to redefine labour relations in the new plants to lower labour costs and limit union influence in the manufacturing process. Notably, auto corporations have taken advantage of the passive unions in the Mexican automotive industry, which are usually linked to the government controlled Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). Within the car industry, CTM unions have obstructed efforts to unify workers in different auto plants and in effect allowed the corporations to blackmail workers at older, more established plants to gain greater management flexibility.

A trend has emerged where older plants with better paid workers and more rights often saw their operations restructured or closed, while new, comparatively more lean production facilities were built that employed younger, more poorly paid workers with fewer rights and less, if any, union experience. In short, Middlebrook recognised that workers were being subjected to a phenomenon similar in nature to whipsawing and were on the receiving end of exactly the same type of corporate restructuring which autoworkers in the US and Canada have faced.

Mexican autoworkers and other Mexican labour activists are quick to acknowledge that such things have happened and they see similarities between what has been taking place in the automotive industry there and in the rest of North America.

Some of the most compelling evidence of just how harmful this restructuring has been for Mexican workers can be seen in the rapid growth of car and parts plants within and in close proximity to the Maquiladora Zone and in the conditions of life for the workers in these plants. Many believe the Maquiladora Zone shows what the future holds for the entire Mexican working class, once NAFTA has fully come into effect.

The Maquiladora Zone is located throughout the US-Mexican border region. It is only a few miles wide but it is 2,000 miles long and includes several urban centres which are immediately adjacent or in close proximity to US border cities, both large and small.

There are over 3,100 maquilas or foreign-owned industrial plants producing

mainly for export in the Maquiladora Zone. These currently employ more than 670,000 workers and produced 39% of Mexico's exports in 1995.

Besides car and auto parts there are numerous textile, metal and wood products plants and a rapidly growing number of electronics plants especially in Tijuana in north-west Mexico. The transnational corporations that own most of these facilities are only required to pay taxes based on the value added to goods while they are in Mexico.

These transnational corporations profit from employment of workers who are not only paid less than workers elsewhere in Mexico, but receive few, if any, benefits. Most are under 25 and work in plants with no union whatsoever. Those who are in a union are usually represented by the government controlled CTM, whose national leadership has repeatedly agreed to and helped enforce a freeze on workers' wages that holds them far below Mexico's rate of inflation. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that there are some dissident local unions within CTM. These unions have tried, and in some cases succeeded in functioning like legitimate workers' organisations.

Mexican Labour Law

Another problem workers in the Maquiladora Zone face is that they are kept in the dark about Mexico's progressive but poorly enforced labour laws. Indeed the maquilas have been able to operate outside of Mexico's federal labour law since the 1970s when these plants began to be built in any numbers. They were built to order according to Kathryn Kopinak of the University of Western Ontario in a recently published book about the Maquiladora Zone, "Desert Capitalism". Because the plants operate outside federal labour law, workers in the Maquiladora Zone are routinely denied the right to organise independent unions that are genuinely accountable to them and have even faced police violence when they tried.

Ciudad Juarez is a city of over a million people located next to El Paso, Texas, and has a thriving maquila industry. Few of the workers are unionised and almost all of those who are belong to a CTM union. As a direct consequence of this most strikes in Ciudad Juarez are wildcat strikes organised by temporary coalitions of workers that form around specific issues and then dissolve once each struggle is over.

In 1995 there was a series of wildcat strikes over wages in Juarez. One of these took place at a Zenith plant and another at a Ford plant. Both of these strikes were actively opposed by CTM officials representing the workers in these plants. The CTM had negotiated wage increases for the workers within the limits of the wage freeze. Yet both of these illegal strikes won wage settlements that were superior to what the CTM had negotiated.

Health and safety laws are likewise poorly enforced in the Maquiladora Zone. The situation with hazardous waste materials labelling is indicative of the reprehensible situation that prevails with respect to worker health and safety. The text of the labelling is often only in English. Containers from Canadian firms such as Custom Trim Ltd, of Waterloo, Ontario, *have* been found with bilingual labels - in English and French! There is a callous disregard for the health and safety of the young women workers who make up half the workforce in the border region (i.e. unprotected exposure of women of child bearing age to soldering fumes in electronics plants, such as Zenith at Matamoros). Sexual harassment is also overt and rampant throughout the region.

Environmental laws are likewise poorly enforced throughout Mexico and toxic pollution is an extremely serious problem in the Maquiladora Zone. Domingo Gonzalez, a leading environmental activist in the border region and a prominent member of the tri-national Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras based in San Antonio, Texas perceptively described the Rio Grande which runs through the border region as a toxic time bomb created by massive poisoning of the water table.

Two incidents that occurred in the early 1990s involving severe toxic pollution dramatise the seriousness of the situation. A sampling taken by the US-based National Toxics Campaign from a ditch next to a GM Fischer Body Bumper plant in Matamoros revealed the presence of the hydrocarbon xyklene in a concentration of 2,700,000 parts per billion, (about 6,000 times the US standard).

The same hydrocarbon was found by the National Toxics Campaign at 53,000 times the US standard behind a Matamoros plant owned by the Stepan Chemical Corporation of Northfield, Illinois. Stepan is arguably the worst toxic polluter in the region, and the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras made a video about it called "Stepan Chemical: The Poisoning of a Mexican Community".

More recently US activist organisation Public Citizen, in an extensive investigation of the environmental crisis in the border region, found that the situation has worsened since NAFTA. The findings disputed the claims of NAFTA's supporters who have consistently tried to argue that the environmental situation would improve as a result of economic development facilitated by the treaty.

Most importantly, this toxic pollution is routinely located either in the midst of, or very close to, the colonias or residential districts where the maquila workers live. In some cases ditches with the stench of toxic pollution coming from them run right by workers' houses. The children of these workers play immediately around these ditches as well.

Living conditions and the lack of economic infrastructure have not been seriously addressed since NAFTA. Most workers live in homes that are little or no better than shacks, without heat, running water, acceptable toilet facilities and in some cases electricity. Almost all the roads that run by their homes are unpaved and the colonias in which they are located typically have no garbage collection. One colonia in Matamoros is built over what used to be a rubbish dump. As a result the danger of cholera outbreaks is all too real. These conditions exist in large measure because of the low wages paid to the workers, rapid and uncontrolled economic growth and the fact that the transnational corporations operating in the Maquiladora Zone typically do not pay municipal taxes.

The Peso Crisis

In addition, the immediate economic situation of the workers, many of whom migrated to northern Mexico due to the wide availability of work there, has grown considerably worse since NAFTA, despite NAFTA's supporters' claims that the treaty would produce rising incomes for Mexico's workers.

The most immediate cause of this development was the sharp devaluation of the Mexican peso at the end of 1994. Because most of the goods purchased in the Maquiladora Zone are bought with US dollars the purchasing power of the pesos paid to Mexican workers there dropped by about one half. This development was especially brutal because many of these workers were witnessing a sharp drop in the real income of Mexico's workers for the second time in about a decade.

During the 1980s the wages of all Mexican workers were cut roughly in half when the government limited wage increases as part of a package of economic reforms. Those economic reforms were designed to liberalise or restructure Mexico's economy, in response to the country's

debt crisis and pressure from the International Monetary Fund. The reforms were meant to make Mexico open for business.

In the aftermath of the 1994 peso crisis, it became common for families in the Maquiladora Zone to need at least three wage earners to maintain a subsistence income. At the same time the sharp decline in the value of the peso also yielded a sharp drop in labour costs for employers in the border region and a sudden surge in their plants' profitability. This is in turn stimulated additional foreign investment in the Maquiladora Zone, more uncontrolled economic growth and more corporate restructuring.

In short, the corporate restructuring and greatly increased mobility of capital that were facilitated by the implementation of NAFTA have been, and continue to be, synonymous with the economic and ecological plunder of Mexico's Maquiladora Zone by transnational corporations. These very same corporations, particularly in the auto industry, are relentlessly restructuring and downsizing their operations elsewhere in Mexico, the US and Canada at the expense of workers to become lean and yield a higher rate of profit.

In conclusion, these things illustrate the kind of barbarism that is being wrought in North America by the global corporate agenda, and this barbarism will not be stopped until we understand the forces that are creating it and recognise and act on the need for workers to build a movement of resistance on a multi national basis.

Bruce Allen, Canadian Autoworkers Local 199

Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras

@ Quiz

1. What is Tyndall scattering?

2. In 1918 the syndicalist Marine Transport Workers Union in Buenos Aires won a collective agreement where the unemployed were taken on in strict rotation on ships of their own nationality. What happened to those who had no official nationality?

3. What idiomatic phrase meaning to kill oneself persists even though it's no longer a reliable method of ending it all?

4. Few States ever dare to honour anarchists, even after their death. But where is there a large town named after a country's revolutionary hero, who was an anarchist?

5.. After the second world war, a group of working class militants came together in London to combat the fascists who were beginning to regoup. They were known as the 43 Group, and one of their number has gone on to make an international name for himself in a field not normally associated with militant anti-fascism. Who is he?

answers page 31

bradford'97

a May Day away day!

May 1st is a day of celebration around the world, when ordinary people gather together to share an ideal of a life free from exploitation and oppression; to promote the principles of Liberty, Equality and Solidarity! Whether we are working, looking after kids, studying, or on the dole, May Day is OUR day!

May day isn't about changing one government for another, Labour for Tory or capitalist for communist. Its about TAKING CONTROL OF OUR OWN LIVES and celebrating our solidarity and our strengths. Throughout the world millions of ordinary people celebrate the 1st of May. In Britain, it has become a bank holiday and shuffled off to the nearest Monday. Here in Bradford we are reclaiming May Day as our own.

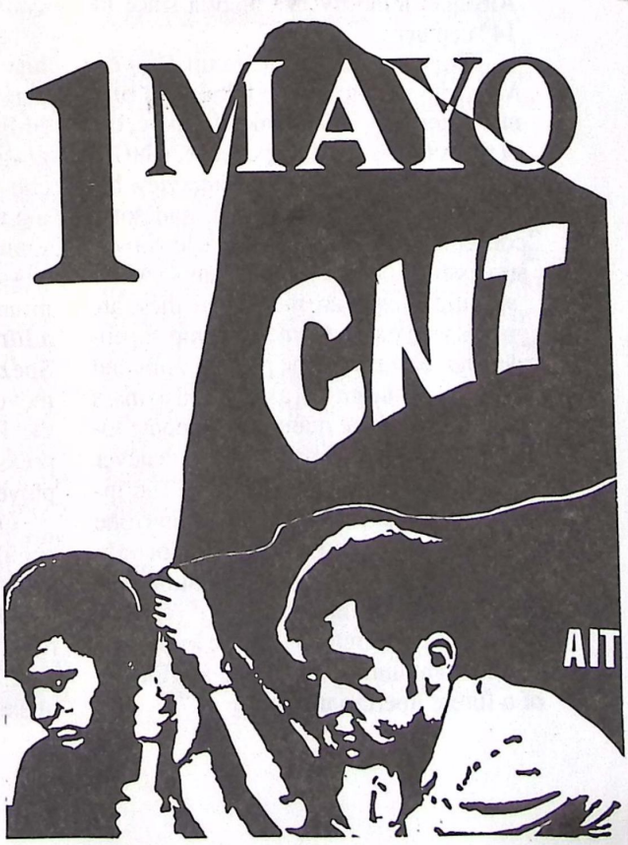
What is happening in Bradford? May Day is about doing things for ourselves, so that is what is happening. Different people have already organised several events around May Day: a May Day march through town; live music, comedy and kids stuff in town centre on May Day afternoon; a play about the first May Day, written and performed by local people in a local theatre; a national anarchist bookfair (May 3rd); an anarchist film season at a local cinema, loads of gigs, plus debates and meetings.

Organise your own event A celebration drink down the pub, a party, a meeting, or something more adventurous? Get together with friends, workmates or an organisation you're involved with, and create your own part of the May Day action. We'll help where we can and, if its in the spirit of May Day, we'll list it in the free May Day programme.

Join in and celebrate May Day with us.

Contact:

The May Day Collective,
c/o 1 in 12 Club, Albion Street, Bradford 1
Tel: 01274 734160
E-mail: 1in12@legend.co.uk



pointing the way ahead

community organising in southern Italy

SPEZZANO ALBANESE is a small town of 6000 situated in La Sila, in Calabria. There is an Albanian community where Albanian is still spoken and orthodox religion practised. (Note: There has been an Albanian minority in Calabria since the 14th century).

Two comrades of the group *Drapeau Noir* who went to southern Italy last summer, interviewed Domenico Liquore, one of the veterans of this experience, who has written a book about it. The interview has been translated from French, and some concepts have been impossible to convey successfully in English; for example where "specific groups" are mentioned, these are groups with a specific membership of people who subscribe to the politics, aims and strategies of the group, as opposed to mass movements where many people come together to pursue a common aim,whatever their individual political beliefs. The interview gives a fascinating insight into one group's attempts and successes at not only confronting the local administration, but also offering alternative ways of organising and decision making for the local (and wider) community, to provide a 'glimpse of a future libertarian society'.

***Drapeau Noir**: How did the Municipal Federation of the Base(FMB) become constituted?*

A: The FMB is the result of the local anarchist group's activities during the period between 1972 and 1992 when the FMB was finally constituted. Our activity always paid particular attention to local and territorial problems, without ignoring national and international issues. For example, the death of Franco and the reconstruction of the CNT in Spain, which prompted debate nationally in Italy, was addressed in various activities in Spezzano. The '70s saw strong social movements in Italy, after the Massacre of the Piazza Fontana. Here this was expressed in a strong student and unemployed movement.

Our group quickly understood we couldn't limit ouselves to ideological intervention and thought our principles should involve us in the practise of grassroots struggle which was developing at the time. The group was made up of students, unemployed, some building workers and day labourers. The only group not represented was, perhaps, women which was our eternal problem, while there were more and more women in the collectives emerging from these struggles.

From these struggles came the first Committees of the Unemployed, of Workers, the first mass structures which aimed towards a national influence. These bodies weren't only made up of anarchists, and were completely autonomous from the specific anarchist group. There was a dual vision of the organisation - the specific groups and the mass organisations. This work continued until 1977, the years in which the local anarchists of Spezzano provided a rallying point for the whole Castrovillari region.

At a national level in those years there was talk of the reconstruction of the USI (Unione Sindacale Italiana - AIT section). There were 2 "congresses", one in Rome the other in Genoa, from which emerged

2 tendencies. We fought for anarcho-syndicalism because our experience had already pre-empted the debate which took place nationally. We participated in the debate but were told that the Italian situation couldn't accommodate our political viewpoint. The debate was mainly ideological, with almost personal polemics and a perception that the USI didn't grow from the needs of workplace organisation but from the desires of certain anarchists who had simply changed their name. During this time, in Spezzano, anarcho-syndicalism was being built in the committees of struggle which covered a vast geographical area and contained anarchists, comrades from extra-parliamentary groups, some from Proletarian Democracy or Marxist formations and the majority were workers, unemployed, etc. While the formation of a union was proposed nationally, there was little anarchist presence in the struggles of this period (hospital workers, airport workers, etc). So the USI was born inside specific groups incapable of recruiting dissidents from the official unions. This situation brought about, at the Congress of Genoa, two different positions. On one side certain comrades wanted the renaissance of the USI, on the other were those who prioritised grassroots struggles (e.g. temporary school workers).

We did not fit into either of these positions and on returning to Spezzano it was decided to unite all the different structures of the area in one Union Sindacale de Zone (USZ). The USZ, formed in '78, did not adhere to the CAD (Committee of Direct Action) formed in Bologna after the Genoa Congress, nor to the USI constituted in the Parma Congress in 1979. The USZ worked for more than 5 years on work struggles, unemployment etc. and opposition to the town hall began to grow. From this communalist and municipalist current came, in 1992, the FMB. I would like it to be understood - the diversified mass structures, which were doing a specific job, with the USZ, found unity which expanded into a wider territory. It moved from classical syndicalism to a complex intervention which put together not only workplace issues but also the other realities present in the local area. It began to look at the choices of the administration which were publicly denounced for their clientist character, blackmail, discriminatory behaviour and use of repression. There were struggles over health, education and fraud in the local council. Our relationship with the council administration, who tried to stop our meetings, was one of struggle. Sympathy was growing towards us. There were 200 in the organisation of which 30 were very active.

DN: Who were the left groups working in the same terrain at the time?

A: In '76, the marxist Luta Continua disappeared. In '77, the Marxist left returned to parliamentary institutions like Proletarian Democracy. There were some Leninists and Workers Autonomy who never had much clout with us. There weren't any organised groups and already in 77 our group was the only real opposition in the whole district.

DN: Which party controlled the Town Hall?

A: The mayor was Communist Party (PC), but was worse than a Christian Democrat. Part of our work was to show that political membership didn't change things deeply. Power corrupts. The libertarian ideology of the USZ could be seen there and it was agreed to propagate this idea, even if it meant a hard struggle with the rank and file of the PC whose leaders denounced us. There were times where this confrontation verged on the physical.

In '92 the mayor and a group of councillors were held on criminal charges. People began to realise that everything we had been denouncing since the end of the '70s wasn't just fabrication, and it generated more interest in our activities. Before '83, the mayor often dared us to denounce his dealings to the law knowing

this was against our logic and our praxis. In 83, some of the workers in the USZ, after a big debate, on a personal level, decided to take the matter before the magistrate. A year later, following the enquiry, a split occurred in the PC. In 84, to keep his office, the mayor was obliged to buy a councillor of the MSI (fascists). During the 85 elections, we took the opportunity to create an alternative. There were strong pressures to present a list (of candidates); however over the years we had developed an abstentionist practice. The message had got across for national elections but in the local elections the illusion of being able to change things was tenacious. A civic list was presented in which we refused to participate. This list, in an indirect manner, had libertarian aspirations and hijacked many of the methods which we had used effectively in the previous years. With time though, it backtracked, changing practice and objectives, to defend the same old interests as before. While the civic list was being drawn up, we recognised the need for a libertarian response, to reinforce the reasons for our abstentionism at national and local level, a *Municipal Federation of the Base* which would present an alternative to the power of the town hall. And while the others worked on their electoral campaign, we set up a Committee for the FMB in an attempt to gather together those who saw themselves in the current of self-organisation and direct action and opposed abdicating power to the local council. During the electoral campaign, a constitutive assembly of the FMB was held. The Town Hall was made up of the civic list, socialists, CDs and the PC in opposition. The mayor was from the civic list.

DN: What were the relations between the FMB and the local administration?

A: The FMB posed an alternative. It has always wanted to represent something other than the power of the Town Hall and that's why we defined ourselves as an alternative. Relations with the Town Hall were conflictual. The FMB used its past experience and offered a complex structure. A mass organisation which didn't want to be only about the bread and butter issues of the workplace, unemployment and the school, but also political. It had to offer a glimpse of what a future libertarian society could be. There were workplace union structures in the FMB but they encompassed all the other diverse social categories in the civic union.

DN: What's the civic union?

A: Workers are not just those fighting for their rights but also citizens living in the same area. All groups had the right to sit in the civic union. The civic union organises the district's services, education and health in opposition to the choice of the administration and offers a different way of managing and deciding. When we began to talk about the FMB, we were afraid of being misunderstood by the libertarian movement, of being accused of being "interclassists", or of playing up to the ideas of the right wing union UIL. That was our fear but it was the logical follow-on from our actions over the years. It must be stated that our conception of

municipalism is different from that of Bookchin. Italy has had historically a very varied tradition of communalism. Berneri is one of the greatest agitators in this tradition and I believe he would have much to say to Bookchin, as he would to Malatesta, in his later years when he began to talk of gradualism. It is certain he would not have agreed with Bookchin.

DN: What does Bookchin propose?

A: He proposes that anarchists should present themselves for election, and once in the town hall, give an impetus to a direct, grassroots democracy. We believe that to enter the electoral game is to lose what is specific to anarchism. Anarchists reject the delegation of power. They can never create a party. To accept power and to say that the others are acting in bad faith and that we would be better, would *force* non-anarchists towards direct democracy. We reject this logic and believe that all organisations must come from the grassroots.

DN: How do you define communalism?

A: It is the bringing together of all the interests within the district. In intervening at a municipal level, we become involved in not only the world of work but also the life of the community. Every time the Spezzano council make a choice, the Civic Union of the FMB make counter proposals, which aren't presented to the Council but proposed for discussion in the area to raise people's level of consciousness. Whether they like it or not the Town Hall is obliged to take account of these proposals. For example, it was proposed that the rates and the land use plans and its variants should be discussed in a general assembly. We have fought and continue to fight the choices of the administration, but an alternative can be made possible, making alternative proposals and managing it properly.

DN: We read in Umanita Nova that there was one assembly where 4 mayors were invited. How did you arrive at that decision and what was brought to the FMB?

A: We have made links with 4 council districts because we felt that our experience should go beyond Spezzano. In effect, the FMB is already well known as Spezzano is the principal town in the canton and because our activity was not only known in the surrounding country but by many passing through. We think we must make a qualitative leap to promote the formation of identical bodies in neighbouring areas where there is already sympathy for the FMB. In areas such as Terranova, Tarsia, etc, research on services and administrative choices was done. We have been to 4 districts where they have been given provisional rates and studied them and looked at the choices involved. It must be said that in this work we have some facilities because after 20 years of existence no council administration dares refuse our requests out of fear of public denunciation. In this study, a document was produced where we laid out the choices and put counter proposals at a departmental level. Those proposals which touched services, health, education and town planning were addressed not just to Spezzano, but also to Terranova, Tarsia and San Lorenzo. At the end of this work we called an assembly where we invited the mayors to see the functioning and critiques of the assembly. The assembly was positive because it created conditions for this type of activity to spread across the whole area. After the summer holidays, it's the type of intervention we are going to develop. Now, nationally, this type of intervention is widely discussed. The festivals of self-organisation mirror the question of Communalism versus municipalism or self government (the 2 terms used in Italy - municipalism a la Bookchin or communalism which we prefer)

DN: Do other experiences of this type exist in Italy? Or others who work from the same perspective?

A: When we were thinking about the Civic Union we were afraid that many comrades would misunderstand our step. This led us to under-publicise the FMB. For *Umanita Nova* we only wrote a report of what led up to the FMB without explaining what it really was. We immediately got a number of letters asking for further explanations. In effect we got the negative reactions we expected. This prompted us to come clean with our strategy. We found that other currents were agitating on the municipalist problem. We made contact with a network of small groups, co-ordinated from Bologna. From this came a first congress. At the same time the Liga Nord ('Northern League' - conservatives who want northern Italy to cecede) were also raising the question of federalism. On one side, in Italy, there is a reactionary federalism, racist and conservative, as in the Liga, and on the other, in opposition, libertarian federalism was reinvigorated from its historic ideological roots. Comrades of Milan, Turin and others had the idea of a festival of self-organisation to address all those active around municipalism, communalism or simply self -organisation, against the logic of domination. At Alessandria, the first festival happened and many different currents were present. It linked all ages and was important as much on a quantitative level as a qualitative. I would like to reaffirm that municipalism wasn't invented by Bookchin.

Municipalism is part of the historic ideology of anarchism. Bookchin has taken a strand of this and put his ideas inside it, ideas not shared by all, us included. We reject the argument that anarchists should become candidates, making them manage power and lose their identity. This strategy could come from a grassroots movement but anarchists must have the capacity to defend their alternative, or they risk becoming no better than the others. The few who follow Bookchin's logic and stand in municipal elections are not regarded as part of the general anarchist movement.

DN: In your book, you speak about the attitudes and language that the anarchists have taken from the Marxist movement. You consider it embarrassing and negative, why?

A: I think that anarchists, historically, have an inferiority complex towards Marxism (in the Spanish revolution I believe many errors were due to this complex). If one takes as an example the concept of class and class struggle, we still retain the Marxist conception of the proletariat. In the anarchist movement, the class is not only the proletariat but all the exploited, the dominated, those submitting to power. When we begin to speak only of the proletariat, our logic is Marxist. Even our syndicalism, which is complex and not only supportive (anarcho-syndicalism), has submitted to the same logic. The Spanish CNT has at its core a strong concept of the proletariat even though it attained communalism and self organisation. It's as if the anarchists want to use the same Marxist logic, logic in which they will be lost. Anarchists must take account of all the exploited, of all the dominated and create the social structures which anticipate a future libertarian society. Apart from the Spanish revolution we have not succeeded in that. I think that the Spanish revolution must be discussed critically to separate the positive aspects and the limits.

DN: Does the FMB limit itself to counter-propositions to the Town Hall or does it seek to create alternatives on the ground?

A: We have created a co-operative, "Arcobaleno" (Rainbow) of painters and decoraters. We have also tried to organise agricultural workers and services. We want to be capable of creating self-organised work. The big merit and the goal of

self-organisation is to regroup the comrades not only for political discussions on municipalism but to confront practical experience like the co-operatives. Beyond intervention in opposition to the institution, one wants to create alternative structures of production capable of glimpsing the future society.

DN: Let's be devil's advocate. Are you not afraid that your co-operative will become like the co-operatives in the north of Italy? These co-operatives, in their dealings with the capitalist economy succeeded in achieving self exploitation, that is to say they respond to market forces and so have lost all alternative potential.

A: The result of the co-operatives in Italy is as you say, but the origin is a libertarian idea of self - organisation. They must be taken back to their origins. The same fears exist around federalism: the US is federalist, Bossi (leader of the Liga Nord) is federalist, Switzerland is federalist. They have taken many of our words, such as federalism, self-organisation, etc, but should that stop us using these words? As for the co-operatives, there are some dangers especially when there isn't a strong libertarian presence. We had many difficulties when we set up the co-operative because there isn't a mentality or conception of how to work in an alternative way, in opposition to the capitalist model. Mistakes are possible but if the conviction is there and the anarchist movement becomes practically interested, there is less danger of a drift to authoritarianism.

DN: The co-operative is an economic structure and must be accountable to the market. This is why I spoke to you about self-exploitation. To survive, you must create an alternative market, an alternative manner of living capable of blocking the race to consumption, which ends by subverting it.

A: Certainly if the co-operatives are born in isolation, if they aren't seen in terms of a global debate which includes different realities (that is the aim of the self-organisation festivals), the danger of which you speak is very real. We always have it in mind. That's why we seek to bring together all the currents, all the problems and contradictions, to seek solutions. You spoke of self-exploitation. It is possible that in a co-operative one gains less and works more. But all that can change if there are more comrades who have input and a network of different realities. The important thing is that you make it without a boss. Decisions are taken altogether. Yes concessions have to be made to the Capitalist system, but we are beginning to model an alternative society.

There is a division in the anarchist movement . Certain comrades are for the supportive struggle, political, confronting power. They think that the co-operatives, the self-organised groups, must be rejected because they cannot be done within the capitalist system. Others think that it's only important to set up co-operatives or other moments of self-organisation. For me, both lack something. They must be brought together, one cannot live fully in an antagonist manner. In a system of domination, one must be in conflict with power and at the same time one can put forward alternative structures; these two attitudes are part of the same struggle against domination. However, many among us live either 100% class struggle, or a lifestyle buffered against the world of capitalist work, in our self made utopias. In both cases there is a danger of reintegration.

DN: After a long absence I'm struck by the uniformity that the south has succombed to and by the push to consumer society. 12 years ago a variety of different cultures were evident and the poor could easily be distinguished from the rich. Today it seems that the social fabric might disintegrate. People live in front of the TV where the programmes are the same as in France. In one of the poorest regions of Italy there is a constant bombardment of impressionable riches. What is your evaluation of this process and your position on these new facts?

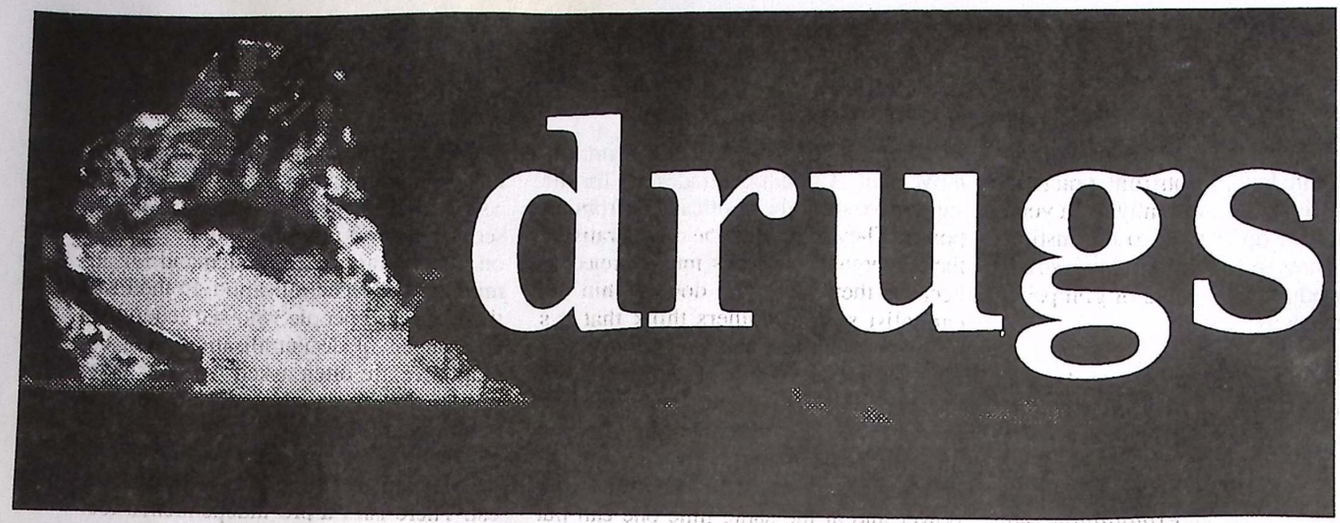
A: The same situation which can be seen everywhere else is perhaps amplified by the fact that people identify with the TV models and get the impression that they can leave behind under-development. I don't believe this to be be something positive because it hides the contradictions that we live in. For example, here, with time, many Albanian words are being replaced by Italian words. Spezzano has submitted to the tyranny of an Italianising culture. The anarchists must be sensible and in this changing situation, not prioritise the issue, but give it its place in a wider cultural context, to make understood that a different way of life to that proposed by consumerism and capitalism does exist. A communalist intervention could address this issue, and progress towards the future in a federalist discourse of respect for minority cultures. Our struggle must be global and culture forms a part of it.

DN: What do you think of Bossi's proposition of secession from Italy?

A: I can say that in the south, the question doesn't exist. In Sicily, in the last regional elections, there was a tentative independentist list but it failed. There isn't a strong independence movement here and secessionism is dimly viewed. There is, on the contrary, a strong demand for administrative decentralisation. In the FMB there are also people who see federalism as a means of decentralisation. For example we are often asked why our taxes must pass through Rome, and why we can't decide ourselves on their use? We say that it is the community which should decide. This question gets a lot of interest. There isn't a pro-independence feeling, the Liga Nord is *rather* rejected than viewed as a project to support, even among those who are against the State. The State here is seen in a contradictory way. It is hated and liked at the same time, liked for the facilities it gives.

DN: What are your links today with USI?

A: We stuck to the USI because we believed that a real discourse was possible there about the social organisation of society. Now, with the USI split, it was decided to stay outside. What is missing and is in our view indispensable is a debate on anarcho-syndicalism: its ends and means. At the moment this debate does not exist. And without it we can't see what will come out of it.



drugs

AFTER SEEING *Clockers*, Spike Lee's film about drug dealers, I never wanted to buy drugs again. Not be cause of how much they fuck you up, but because of the scum you are buying from. It's a powerful film and took me a few minutes to realise that I had no similar qualms about buying petrol, chocolate or rice. Or even going to the cinema and handing my money over to big shot Hollywood entrepreneurs like Spike Lee. That's the power of the film and that is why drugs are a serious issue not just cheap feature material for the stylemags.

There has been a very real change in the perception of illegal drugs both in society as a whole and amongst the subcultures, political or otherwise, closest to them, particularly in anarchist/squatter scenes. The realisation that there was, after the 1981 riots, a large amount of heroin around did lead to a moralistic but practical attitude against hard drugs and their use. The eighties free festivals and traveller sites were virtually smack free. There was a definite social rejection of junkies and smack heads in a lot of the sub-culture. At best there was a real understanding of the political role of heroin in policing the ghettos both through the drugs themselves and the networks that provided them. The worst was the moralising pro-government anti-heroin campaign. The government's own "heroin screws you up" campaign was received with the scorn it deserved.

Heroin was widely used across Europe as a means of breaking the social movements of the late seventies and early eighties. Its success is most graphic in Italy: both the destruction of a huge social movement and the reinforcing of the Mafia who would always back the state and big business. There was always resistance. In Zurich drug-politics have become an important part of the political agenda of radicals as well as that of the right. Militants in Germany, Denmark and Greece have consistently taken vigorous action against smack dealers. In 1991 two policemen were killed in a shooting in Athens. At first "terrorists" were blamed. Later it emerged that they had shot each other after arguing over the proceeds of their drug pushing!

Now it seems that heroin and other hard drugs are acceptable in supposedly sussed political scenes that would have rejected them before. The metamorphosis of E from drippy Californian marital therapy elixir to hardcore rave pill overturned the old perceptions of dope and speed (good), acid (dubious Hawkwind connotations), coke (yuppie scum) and heroin (junky losers). Getting wasted is all that matters.

Ecstasy is particularly important because of its acceptability and widespread use coupled with its classification as a class A. Ten years ago, drug "education" foundered on the lie that all drugs were the same. It was no good a teacher, cop or parent saying that heroin was bad (true or not) because they had just told you that dope was bad too. Now any distinction between hard and soft drugs is impossible and useless. Furthermore the effects of long term ecstasy use (becoming stupid and fluffy) and withdrawal provide a ready market for heroin. At the same time heroin itself is being re-imaged upmarket by films such as *Pulp Fiction*, *Killing Zoe* and *Trainspotting*, and smack pop bands like Elastica and Blur.

There are three areas here that are of interest or importance to anarchists. Consumption and its effect on individuals and social groups or movements; the debate (or what passes for debate) on legalisation or decriminalisation and finally the structures of production and distribution.

It is very easy to be utopian or moralistic about drug use; to say that people take drugs because of the oppressive nature of our society and to present users or addicts as victims or, alternatively, to say that drug use is some sort of abdication of responsibility to yourself and your community. However true, both ignore the fact that people take drugs because they want to get wrecked. This may either be through illegal drugs or through alcohol. (The most widespread addiction is to prescribed drugs but this is more related to our medical system than to recreational drug use). People may have different attitudes about users of drugs other than their own favourite tipples but no drug can be said, accurately, to be entirely benign. Personal preferences are entirely subjective but still dominate discussion on what we think about drugs.

Cannabis is most eagerly defended as less harmful than alcohol or nicotine and somehow wholesome. But regular dope smokers are just as precious about their stash and supply as any coke-fiend. Coupled with the intense laziness and the utter boredom that non-smokers may have to tolerate, we do not need vague medical evidence about long term use leading to mental illness to see that there is a real threat to any revolutionary movement from this devil's weed. Can any comrade swear honestly that they have never been to an organising meeting that was not doubled in length by a cadre of potheads? The excellent newer strains of homegrown only add to these conclusions.

Amphetamines, on the other hand, seem far more suitable for the revolutionary. Nothing is better than speed for seeing you through a night's rioting or for putting you in just the mood for dealing sensibly with the police. A speed comedown is the ideal condition for a clear minded analysis of the totality of capitalism and the resultant paranoia is excellent for identifying infiltrators in your affinity group.

Was it Che Guevara who said, "an army marches on it's nose"? The south American guerrilla movements have long realised that in the mountains and the jungles the struggle goes better with coke.

Only price and social attitudes prevent revolutionaries in this country from realising the infinite superiority cocaine confers on the user. However it could be said that the obsessive behaviour and obnoxiousness associated with this attempt to chemically restructure your nose may only be tolerated by the more Stirnerite elements of the Anarchist movement.

The social movements of 1968 had a great fondness for psychedelics and LSD in particular. There seems to have been considerable faith both in its potential for enlightenment (easier to drop a trip than to wade through Grundrisse) and in its use as chemical warfare on society. The spectre of Acid in metropolitan water supplies was as much a fantasy of the movement as an excuse for pogroms against hippies. Acid induced hallucinations allowed the International Socialists to believe that the time had come to transform themselves into the Socialist Workers Party and meanwhile in Notting Hill Gate people came down off their last trip to find West London had gentrified around them. The dangers are clear. Unless you believe that the most advanced section of the revolutionary movement is the Goa Trance International Dance Scene, there's little need to point out the counter-revolutionary nature of LSD.

Nor does much have to be said about ecstasy, but a huge number of trees are cut down to publish reams of academia, pseudo science and social commentary on everyone's favourite wonder drug. So I will too. So far as casually buying Es in a club goes, the dangers of paying 10 to 15 quid in the dark to someone who is probably not the nicest person in the room seem obvious. But it doesn't stop anyone. Politically the relationship between the "E generation" and the resistance to the anti-rave elements of the CJA are probably negligible. E cannot be used as an excuse for the "everybody's lovely" mentality that was so irritating at the beginning of the campaign. The smug, self-satisfied, self appointed leaders of the "new social movement" don't drop any more ecstasy than the people who took on the cops in Hyde Park in October 94. There's no excuse. Ask yourself if people you know who do a lot of E are nicer, cleverer or more interesting than they were before they started. What do they do when they stop taking ecstasy?

And finally Heroin. This is the one that everyone gets so upset about. For those who have lost friends, whether through death or to the drug itself it is not a subject to be flippant about. However it is exactly this mystification and elevation of smack and smack addiction to some sort of supernatural force that leads to the useless knee jerk reactions that prevent us dealing with drugs outside of the constrictions of established authoritarian or equally invalid trendy liberal mindsets. People don't take heroin because they are forced to. As with all drugs (other than those legal drugs administered by force in prisons and hospitals or prescribed by doctors) there is at least some element of personal choice. If we fail to recognise this we are in no position to confront it.

People don't take heroin, or any other drug, because they want to get addicted, steal from their mates and the people around them, OD or choke on their own vomit. Nor is heroin use purely a result of shit social conditions. It is just as prevalent amongst, though sadly not confined to, rock stars, artists and the children of the rich. At some point people take heroin because they like the hit. Irvine Welsh's quote from *Trainspotting*, "Take the best orgasm you've ever had and multiply it by ... and you're still not there" just reinforces this. In itself it is just saying what a lot of people think. *Time Out's* subsequent use of the quote on their front cover was, whatever their scumbag editor tried to say, exploitative 'smack is chic' advertising.

Was it Che Guevara who said, "an army marched on its nose"?

If you have money and a clean supply of heroin you can go on indefinitely. Some of your friends may notice, you probably won't. A lot of them can effectively ignore it. Sooner or later you'll fuck up. For most people an easy supply of money and smack is not so available. You'll fuck up sooner. And you'll fuck other people up as long as they let you. If you want to, you can do this, in different ways with any combination of the above drugs and more. That's what personal choice is all about.

Smack is singled out for special treatment from politicos for various reasons. The two most important are probably the vigilante aspect and the social work industry surrounding it. The spread of HIV through shared needles has meant that considerable money has gone into HIV-related drug projects, like research, policy groups, health projects and occasionally even practical help. However as the bulk of the funding comes from state or pro state organisations their aims are to defend the status quo from any perceived threat and if necessary to introduce more control. It has also created a lot of jobs for social work graduates and a new niche in the social work caste.

Where radical solutions have surfaced through the involvement of committed people who know what they are talking about they are either shut down or co-opted. Needle exchanges are a vital, effective (and in purely financial terms, cheap) part of preventing the spread of HIV. Their existence confronts the moralising attitude around heroin by accepting that people will not just stop because of some message on a pinball machine. However they are often cut to make political capital or used by the police for surveillance.

Radical approaches in Zurich to effectively decriminalise drug use and provide support for users, in one of the richest cities in the world, faced an enormous backlash. Police crackdowns and harassment, especially of foreigners, were given an impetus from right wing politicians and while the level of drug use wasn't affected the profits of the drug dealers were preserved and the gentrification of central Zurich was greatly aided. This reaction was mirrored in the right's onslaught against perceived subversion by leftist teachers. These were two planks of rightist policy in City and canton elections.

Vigilante action against heroin dealers could be something that appeals to anarchists. The ideal of defence of our communities, whether social or geographical, should not be dismissed. However there are a number of contradictions. A story earlier last year in the Guardian described an attack by a group of Dublin residents against drug dealers. One, an HIV positive junky, was beaten to death by about 15 people. They had already attacked a number of other dealers who were healthier and more able to survive the beating. But look at the same story reported in a fascinating hard hitting article in the current issue of *Red Action*. Here it is shown exactly how our confusion about this issue can be used to try (unsuccessfully in Dublin) to divide and dissipate grassroots militant action, to drive people back into the arms of the police and the state, to scare them from taking the law into their own hands. The distinction between users funding their own addiction and bigger dealers is of little relevance if it is the users who are selling to your children. This sort of vigilante action has gone on for a long time in Dublin. When bigger dealers were attacked in

the eighties the police came down hard on the vigilantes and people prepared to support them. A lot of the media both here and in Ireland tried to link it with the IRA in an attempt to undermine the considerable support there was. *An Phoblacht*, to its credit, was the only paper that carried any sort of coverage of the campaign rather than just covering the attacks but still in unhelpfully emotive terms. Some of those targeted by anti-drugs campaigners use the spectre of IRA involvement in the vigilante movement to try and get sympathy and state protection.

While the state and media trot out the same bullshit about vigilantes and police powers from the 80s, working class people in Dublin have learned and moved on. They still see the need to act for themselves and have the courage to do so. A new initiative is the demand for treatment centres, and in Tallaght a centre was set up by local people themselves when the authorities refused to act. Residents' action in King's Cross, London, in 1992/3 against crack dealing was briefly effective in that it brought both longer term and newer residents together to some extent, and along with a demonstration, made life a little more difficult for the dealers. However it was easily manipulated by local politicos into a "law and order anti-drugs/ anti prostitution issue" calling for more police action. A lot of people probably did want more police action but when it came it moved the dealers around for a bit and then life went back to normal. By allowing the initiative to be taken back by the politicians and the police, any potential for a more permanent improvement was lost. King's Cross will remain a centre for crack and hard drugs until it becomes a welcoming tourist area. Hotels are already being emptied of homeless people in preparation for this. For the moment the crack dealers are a useful deterrent to local people who might want to fight against the developers.

It is not only "hard" drugs that can be used to destroy communities. There is evidence of heroin and crack being introduced deliberately to break up resistance movements and working class communities all round the world. The most obvious examples being black communities in the USA and in the 70s youth movement in Italy. Research here could point up more modern parallels. However, more directly, we all have experience of actions, social centres, groups or other projects fucked up by people who are doing too many drugs. This isn't a state conspiracy, this is something that has been going on for years and something we need to learn to sort out. It is all very well to get on a moral high horse about drug barons and pushers but it is far more important to work out how to deal with more immediate problems caused by people around us, often our friends or ourselves. Enthusiasm for vigilante action, by other people, somewhere else, is pointless.

Usually the drugs used by the state to keep people down or that we use to fuck ourselves up are totally legal. However it is not the purpose of this article to look at this issue. The important difference between valium and lager, on the one hand, and smack and dope on the other is that dope etc. are illegal. Recent years have seen some prospect of change particularly with cannabis. The widespread use and high profile of dope smoking has led to a growing strength for legalisation. The absurdity of the law is the strongest argument, the campaigns for legalisation are big business, but the subject is still taboo for "respectable" society. Labour hack Clare Short discovered this when she somehow forgot herself (short term memory loss?) and spoke what was left of her mind. In a by-election a couple of years ago reformed (?) speed freak and Blair brown-noser Phil Woolas tried unsuccessfully to smear the moderately pro-legalisation Liberal-Democrat candidate as a junky/pusher for the evil crime of calling for a Royal Commission on decriminalisation. Woolas lost. However, the recent conviction and imprisonment of Michael Marlow for publishing a book on cannabis cultivation is a reversal for pro-dope, pro-legalisation campaigners.

The legalisation movement, whether it is the Legalise Cannabis Campaign or putting dope seeds in balloons, is one that anarchists tend to be in favour of: at least the pot smoking hippies are "doing something". However they are in reality doing little more than sitting about getting stoned and whining about the pigs. Some groups do put out good information on cops, the law, health, growing etc. but this is not about legalisation or decriminalisation and is the work of a few people who can smoke and still get things done. Eventually. But drug culture is subculture not, as many would have it, counter culture. Any hope of smokers being politicised through involvement in legalisation campaigns is misplaced, and it is probably just as well. People are more likely to come to the obvious conclusions about the idiocy of the law and the enforcement agencies through direct contact not by being "educated" in these worthy campaigns. In terms of dope on its own, do we really want to pay duty on spliffs? Decriminalisation would make a lot of peoples lives easier, it would be a common-sense step by any government. Common-sense and government, do those words often occur in the same sentence?

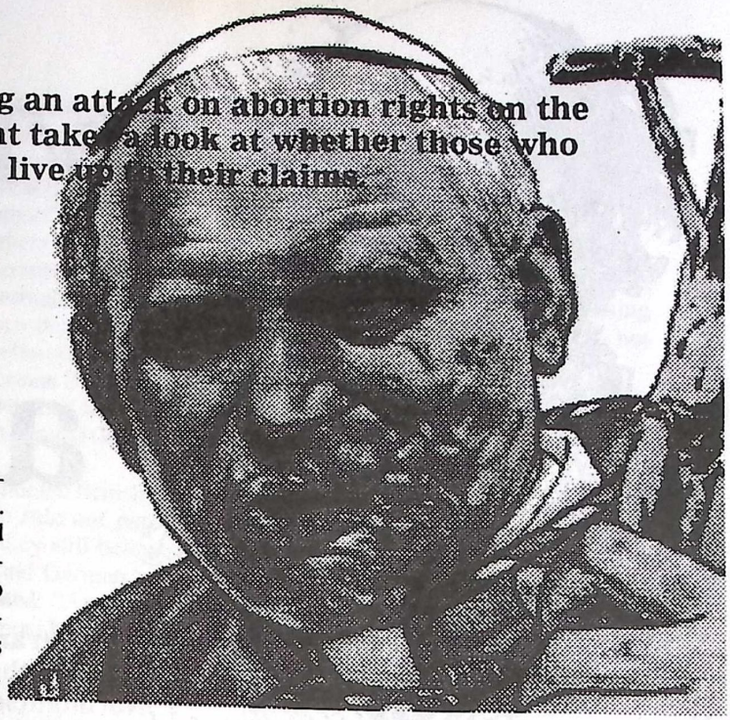
Logically, there cannot be an anarchist argument for laws against some drugs and not others but there often seems to be a different attitude towards the legalisation of other drugs. This is largely based on personal preferences but a difference is often pointed out in the methods of production and distribution. There is a supposed difference between the small farmer of the Moroccan Rif mountains and the small farmers of Columbia. Perhaps the difference is between the benign King Hassan of Morocco and the evil drug barons of Medellin. Or perhaps it is between the corrupt customs officers at Heathrow and the cops at Stoke Newington nick. A distinction based on different means of distribution or production is not going to apply across the board with all drugs. Some dealers/importers are going to be no more of an evil capitalist than your local pub landlord. The nature of the commodity is largely irrelevant A lot more people have died in the last decade to preserve oil supplies than to keep the coke flowing.

Like it or not drugs are an important issue in a lot of the anarchist movement, just as they are in the rest of society. What is important is to sort out how their sale and use affect us in an immediate way and how we deal with that rather than taking up moralistic poses.

For more information about community response to drug problems get hold of *Organise* and *Workers Solidarity* from Ireland. (See contacts page 31)

With the Catholic Church intent on putting an attack on abortion rights on the political agenda, our secular correspondent takes a look at whether those who claim to be guardians of our morals really live up to their claims.

legislating for morality



POLITICIANS WHEN discussing moral issues, try to legislate us into a condition of moral behaviour. When morality is their pre-occupation we may assume that they will make laws to further their moral purposes. Note the recent public orchestration of politicians' views by anti-gun campaigners. The question put to us is who will back the most stringent weapon control laws. No debate is deemed necessary as to whether gun control laws have any impact on the number of guns in circulation or use. There is to be no consideration of the proportion of deaths caused by weapons in the hands of authorised state agents. This is due to a blanket assumption that deaths caused by armed police officers and soldiers are in some way legitimate deaths, deserved deaths.

There exists another unjustifiable assumption in the debate on that other moral issue, abortion. In the abortion debate the moral side is assumed, without any very good reason, by the opponents of all abortion and their ideological masters, the Roman Catholic Church. Their simplistic view is that abortion is always immoral and should never be carried out or allowed in law. This is a vicious and dangerous doctrine because, even in Ireland, where abortion is impossible to obtain legally, women have unwanted pregnancies terminated by unofficial means, usually in conditions of even greater danger to their health than normal, and those who get relatively safe abortions do so by travelling, usually to England, for the operation.

An abortion carried out in favourable conditions is less likely to cause distress and injury to a woman than is absolutely necessary. Unsavoury and dangerous backstreet abortions were the only option for young pregnant women who wanted the termination of a pregnancy in the pre-1967 Abortion Act era. Making available abortions under proper medical conditions to ordinary working class women was a great step forward which this act achieved.

When the recent multiple pregnancy stories were running, one of the women chose to abort one of her foetuses to protect the remainder, to enhance their chances of survival. Almost immediate offers were made of cash support, acknowledging that one of the reasons for getting an abortion was the difficulty of raising children under conditions of financial hardship. This seems to be the crux of the issue which makes the moral high ground the territory which the religious zealots have no right to claim. If financial hardship makes a woman less willing to continue with a pregnancy than she would do if she were better off, then it must also be acknowledged that the financial situation of the individual has an impact on that decision. It may be that morally a birth is always preferable to a termination. But the moral imperative to take all steps to achieve a form of social organisation that ensures a reasonable standard of life for all its members is all the greater if it will diminish the demand for abortions.

This is purely my impression, but I get the feeling that the 'pro-life' activists who turn out with their placards whenever abortion rights are in the public eye are noticeably absent in campaigns to secure a more just distribution of society's wealth in favour of the less well off. It is certainly true in my union branch that members who attend meetings to speak out against resolutions in favour of abortion rights, and who I assume, justifiably I believe, to be Roman Catholics, are not active in the day to day trade union work of improving pay and conditions and opposing management attacks on employees. Until they are seen to be combining the morally pure position they favour on abortion with a significant contribution to good old class struggle work in the union's regular activities, their legitimacy as moral guardians stands in grave doubt.

french anarchist paper sued by anti-abortion politician

LE COMBAT SYNDICALISTE, the paper of the French C.N.T.-A.I.T., is being sued for libel by Christine Boutin, a right wing, anti-abortion deputy. She is asking for 65000 francs in compensation, following the publication of a series of articles about anti-abortion groups in the paper. Christine Boutin, a prominent member of the Catholic right, is the leader of several anti-abortion groups.

The articles concerned the anti-abortion demonstrations outside the A. Mignot Hospital in le Chesnay in April 1996. C.N.T.-A.I.T. militants, who were involved in counter-demonstrations defending the clinic's right to give women freedom of choice, were later given heavy fines and suspended sentences. Anti-abortion demonstrators, arrested at the same time, were on the other hand given low fines.

Messages of support to:
C.N.T.-A.I.T., 33 Rue des Vignoles, 75 020, Paris.
Phone: 43.72.09.54 Fax: 43.72.71.55 or 43.72.87.02
Internet: http://www.altern.com/cnt

syndicalism & anarchism

by Peter Kropotkin

The following is, as far as we know, the first English translation of this article, based on the German reprint published in June 1977 by "Die Anarchistische Vereinigung Norddeutschland" (Anarchist Union of North Germany) which was a direct reprint of the article from *Der Syndicalist* (Berlin) in 1908, originally from *Les Temps Nouveaux*. It was translated by J.Goddard and proofread by K.Guenther in 1994. We are publishing it because, although dated, it still has many relevant points for today.

From all sides, people are always asking us, "What is Syndicalism and what is its relationship to Anarchism?". Here we will do our best to answer these questions.

Syndicalism is only a new name for an old tactic in which the workers of Great Britain have taken successful refuge for a long time: the tactic of Direct Action, and the fight against Capital in the economic sphere. This tactic, in fact, was their favourite weapon. Not possessing the right to vote, British workers in the first half of the nineteenth century won important economic gains and created a strong trade union organisation through use of this weapon alone, and even forced the ruling classes to acknowledge their demands with legislation (including an extension of the franchise).

Direct Action thus proved itself, both in achieving economic results and in extracting political concessions, to be a significant weapon in the economic arena.

In Britain[1], the influence of this idea was so strong that in the years 1830 to 1831 Robert Owen attempted to found one big national union, and an international workers organisation, which using direct action would struggle against Capital. Early fears of persecution by the British government forced him to abandon this idea.

This was followed by the Chartist movement, which used the powerful, widespread and partly secret workers' organisations of the time in order to gain considerable political concessions. At this point British workers received their first lesson in politics: very soon they realised that although they backed political agitation with all means at their disposal, this agitation won them no economic advantages other than those they themselves forced the employers and lawgivers to concede through strikes and revolts. They realised how pointless it was to expect serious improvements to their conditions of life to come from parliament.

French workers came to exactly the same conclusion: the revolution of 1848 which had given France a Republic convinced them of the complete fruitlessness of political agitation and even of political victories; the only fundamental changes to workers conditions of life are those which the ruling classes are forced to concede by Direct Action.

The revolution gave the French another lesson. They saw how completely helpless were their intellectual leaders when it came to finding out about new forms of production which would secure for the workers their share and bring about the end of their exploitation by Capital. They saw this helplessness both in the Luxembourg Commission, which met between April and June 1848, and in the special Chamber chosen to study this question in 1849, on which over 100 Social Democratic deputies sat. From this, they realised that workers themselves had to work out the main lines of the social revolution, on which they must travel if they are to be successful.

The use of direct action by Labour against Capital, and the necessity for workers themselves to work out the forms of economic organisation with which to eliminate capitalist exploitation: these were the two main lessons received by the workers, especially in the two countries with the most developed industry .

When, then, in the years 1864/66 the old idea of Robert Owen was realised and an international workers' organisation was set up, this new organisation adopted both of the above fundamental principles. As the International Workers Association (IWA) had been brought into being by representatives of the British trade unions and French workers (mainly followers of Proudhon), who had attended the second World Exhibition in Paris, it proclaimed that the emancipation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves and that from then on the capitalists would have to be fought with mass strikes, supported internationally.

Following on from this, the first two acts of the International were two such mass strikes, causing enormous agitation in Europe and a salutary fright for the middle class: a strike in Paris, supported by the British trade unions, the other in the Genoese building trade, supported by French and British workers.

In addition, congresses of the International workers no longer bothered with discussing nonsense with which nations were entertained by their rulers in parliamentary institutions. They discussed the

fundamental question of the revolutionary reconstruction of society and set in motion that idea which since then has proved so fruitful; the idea of the General Strike. As to what political form society would take after the social revolution, the federations of the Latin countries openly stood against the idea of centralised states. They emphatically declared themselves in favour of an organisation based on a federation of free communes and farming regions, who in this way would free themselves from capitalist exploitation and on this basis, on the basis of federal combination, form larger territorial and national units.

Both basic principles of modern Syndicalism, of direct action and the careful working out of new forms of social life, are based on trade union federations: from the beginning, both were the leading principles of the IWA.

Even then within the Association, however, there were two differing currents of opinion concerning political activity which divided the workers of different nations: Latin, and German.

The French within the International were mainly supporters of Proudhon, whose leading idea was as follows: The removal of the existing bourgeois state apparatus, to be replaced by the workers own organisation of trade unions, which will regulate and organise everything essential to society. It is the workers who have to organise the production of life's necessities, the fair and impartial exchange of all products of human labour, and their distribution and consumption. And if they do that, we will see that there will be very little left for the state to do. Production of everything needed, and a more equitable exchange and consumption of products, are problems which only the workers can solve. If they can do all this, what remains to be done by existing governments and their hierarchy of officials? Nothing that workers can't organise themselves.

But among the French founders of the International there were those who had fought for the Republic and for the Commune. They were insistent that political activity should not be ignored and that it is not unimportant for proletarian whether they live under a monarchy, a Republic, or a commune. They knew from their own experience that the triumph of conservatives or of imperialists meant repression in all directions, and an enormous weakening of the power of workers to combat the aggressive politics of the capitalists. They were not indifferent to politics, but they refused to see an instrument for the liberation of the working class in electoral agitation or successes, or in the whole toing and fro-ing of political parties. Accordingly, the French, Spanish, and Italian workers agreed to insert the following words into the statutes of the International: "Every political activity must be secondary to the economic."

Among British workers there were a number of Chartists who supported political struggle. And the Germans, unlike the French, did not yet have the experience of two republics. They believed in the coming parliament of the German Reich. Even Lasalle - as is now known - had some faith in a socialist Kaiser of the united Germany he saw rising.

Because of this, neither the British nor the Germans wanted to rule out parliamentary action, which they still believed in, and in the English and German texts of the same statutes inserted: "As a means, every political activity must be secondary to the economic."

Thus was resurrected the old idea of trust in a bourgeois parliament.

After Germany had triumphed over France in the war of 1870-71 and 35,000 proletarians, the cream of the French working class, were murdered after the fall of the Commune by the armies of the bourgeoisie, and when the IWA had been banned in France, Marx and Engels and their supporters tried to re-introduce political activity into the International, in the form of workers candidates.

As a result, a split occurred in the International, which up to then had raised such high hopes among proletarians and caused such fright among the rich.

The federations of the Latin countries, of Italy, Spain, the Jura and East Belgium (and a small group of refugees from France) rejected the new course. They formed their own separated unions and since this time have developed more and more in the direction of revolutionary Syndicalism and Anarchism, while Germany took the lead in the development of the Social Democratic Party, all the more so after Bismarck introduced the universal right to vote in parliamentary elections following the victory in war of the newly established German Reich.

Forty years have now passed since this division in the International and we can judge the result. Later, we will analyse things in more detail but even now we can point to the complete lack of success during these 40 years of those who placed their faith in what they called the conquest of political power within the existing bourgeois states.

Instead of conquering this state, as they believed, they have been conquered by it. They are its tools, helping to maintain the power of the upper and middle class over the workers. They are the loyal tools of Church, State, Capital and the monopoly economy.

But all across Europe and America we are seeing a new movement among the masses, a new force in the workers' movement, one which turns to the old principles of the International, of direct action and the direct struggle of the workers against capital, and workers are realising that they alone must free themselves - not parliament.

Obviously, this is still not Anarchism. We go further. We maintain that the workers will only achieve their liberation when they rid themselves of the perception of centralisation and hierarchy, and of the deception of State appointed officials who maintain law and order - law made by the rich directed against the poor, and order meaning the submission of the poor before rich. Until such fantasies and delusions have been thrown overboard, the emancipation of the workers will not be achieved.

But during these 40 years anarchists, together with those workers who have taken their liberation into their own hands, making use of Direct Action as the preparatory means for the final battle of exploited Labour against - up to the present day - triumphant Capital, have fought against those who entertained the workers with fruitless electoral campaigns. All this time they have been busy among the working masses, to awaken in them the desire for working out the principles for the seizure of the docks, railways, mines, factories, fields and warehouses, by the unions, to be run no longer in the interests of a few capitalists but in the interest of the whole of society.

It has been shown how in England since the years 1820 - 30, and in France following the unsuccessful political revolution of 1848, the efforts of an important section of the workers were directed at fighting Capital using Direct Action, and with creating the necessary workers' organisations for this.

It has also been shown how, between 1866 and 1870, this idea was the most important within the newly established International Workers Association but also how, following the defeat of France by Germany in 1871 and the fall of the Paris Commune, political elements took the upper hand within the International through this collapse of its revolutionary forces and temporarily became the decisive factor in the workers' movement.

Since this time both currents have steadily developed in the direction of their own programmes. Workers' parties were organised in all constitutional states and did everything in their power to increase the number of their parliamentary representatives as quickly as possible. From the

very beginning it could be seen how, with representatives who chased after votes, the economic programme would increasingly become less important; in the end being limited to complete the trivial limitations on the rights of employers, thereby giving the capitalist system new strength and helping to prolong the old order. At the same time, those socialist politicians who competed with the representatives of bourgeois radicalism for the capture of workers' votes helped, if against their intentions, to smooth the way for a victorious reaction across Europe.

Their whole ideology, the ideas and ideals which they spread among the masses, were focused on the one aim. They were convinced supporters of state centralisation, opposed local autonomy and the independence of small nations and devised a philosophy of history to support their conclusions. They poured cold water on the hopes of the masses while preaching to them, in the name of "historical materialism", that no fundamental change in a socialist direction would be possible if the number of capitalists did not decrease through mutual competition. Completely outside their observations lay the fact which is so obvious in all industrialised countries today: that British, French, Belgian and other capitalists, by means of the ease with which they exploit countries which themselves have no developed industry, today control the Labour of hundreds of millions of people in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. The result is that the number of those people in the leading industrialised countries of Europe who live off the work of others doesn't gradually decrease at all. Far from it. In fact, it increases at a constant and alarming rate. And with the growth of this number, the number of people with an interest in the capitulation of the capitalist state system also increases. Finally, those who speak loudest of political agitation for the conquest of power in the existing states fiercely oppose anything which could damage their chances of achieving political power. Anyone who dared to criticise their parliamentary tactics was expelled from international socialist congresses. They disapproved of strikes and later, when the idea of the General Strike penetrated even their own congresses, they fought the idea fiercely with all means at their disposal.

Such tactics have been pursued for a full 40 years, but only today has it become clear to everyone that workers throughout Europe have had enough. With disgust, many workers have come to reject them. This is the reason we are now hearing so much about "Syndicalism".

However, during these 40 years the other current, that which advocates the direct struggle of the working class against Capital, has also grown and developed; it has developed despite government persecution from all directions and in spite of denunciation by capitalist politicians. It would be interesting to plot the steady development of his current and to analyse its intellectual as well as personal connections with the social democratic parties on the one hand, and with the anarchists on the other. But now is not the time for publication of such a work, all things given it is perhaps better that it has not yet been written. Attention would be turned to the influence of personalities, when it is to the influence of the major currents of modern thought and the growth of self-confidence among the workers of America and Europe, a self-confidence gained independently of intellectual leaders, to which special attention has to be directed in order to be able to write a real history of Syndicalism.

All that we now have to say about it is the bare facts that completely independently of the teachings of Socialists, where working masses were gathered together in the main industrial centres, that these masses maintained the tradition of their trade organisations from former times, organising both openly and secretly, while all the time growing in strength, to curb the increasing exploitation and arrogance of the employers. At the same time that the organised working masses grew larger and stronger, becoming aware of the main struggle which since the time of the great French revolution has been the true purpose of life of civilised peoples, their anti-capitalist tendencies became clearer and more certain.

During the last 40 years, years in which political leaders in different countries have used the widest possible means to try to prevent all workers' revolts and to suppress any of a threatening character, we have seen workers' revolts extend ever further, becoming ever more powerful, and workers' aims expressed more and more clearly. Ever increasingly, they have lost the character of mere acts of despair; whenever we have contact with the workers, more and more we hear the prevailing opinion expressed, which can be summarised in the following few words: "Make room, gentlemen of industry! If you can't manage to run the Industries so that we can scrape a living and find in them a secure existence, then away with you! Away, if you are so short sighted and incapable of coming to a sensible understanding with one another over each new turn of production which promises you the greatest instant profit, that you must attack without regarding the harmfulness or usefulness of its products like a flock of sheep! Away with you, if you are incapable of building up your wealth other than with the preparation of endless wars, wasting a third of all goods produced by each nation in armaments useful only for robbing other robbers! Away. If from all the wonderful discoveries of modern science you have not learnt to gain your riches other than from the poverty to which a third of the population of the big towns and cities of our exceptionally rich countries are condemned! Away, if that is the only way you can run industry and trade! We workers will know better how to organise production, if only first we succeed in eradicating this capitalist pest!"

These were the ideas fought over and discussed in workers' households throughout the entire civilised world; they provided the fertile ground for the tremendous workers' revolts we have seen year after year in Europe and in the United States, in the form of strikes by dockers, rail workers, miners and mill workers, etc., until finally taking the form of the General Strike - soon growing into major struggles comparable with the powerful cycles of the force of nature, and next to which small battles in parliaments appear as a children's game.

While the Germans celebrated their ever growing electoral success with red flags and torchlit possessions, the experienced Western people's quietly set to work on a much more serious task: that of the internal organisation of the workers. The ideas with which these last peoples occupied themselves were of a much more important nature. They asked themselves, "What will be the result of the inevitable worldwide conflict between Labour and Capital?", "What new forms of industrial life and social organisation will this conflict create?".

And that is the true origin of the Syndicalist movement, which today's ignorant politicians have just discovered as something new to them.

To us anarchists this movement is nothing new. We welcomed the recognition of syndicalist trends in the programme of the International Workers Association. We defended it, when it was attacked within the International by German political revolutionaries who saw in this movement an obstacle to the capture of political power. We advised the workers of all nations to follow the example of the Spanish who had kept their trade union organisations in close contact with the sections of the International. Since this time we have followed all phases of the workers' movement with interest and know that whatever the coming clashes between Labour and Capital will be like,

vote early vote often

THE DEATH OF another Tory MP in apparently fruit related circumstances (our informant states that he may have slipped on a banana skin) brings a general election closer. We are obviously very excited about this. At the same time anti election activity is getting started. The anti election alliance is mostly south of England based and involves Class War, ACF and Green Anarchist as well as some individuals. Thousands of stickers have been produced as well as a window poster to tell canvassers and candidates to get lost. Publicity stunts by our aspiring rulers will be disrupted and politicians of all flavours harassed. If you are living in the constituencies of any of the high profile scumbags, Jack Straw, Virginia Bottomley, Portillo, etc and want to give them some grief, contact the anti election alliance for rentamob support. On the day the election spectacle will not go unimpeded, from polling stations to politicians the AEA is going to try and make anti-electoral politics felt.

Meanwhile Rock the Vote and Operation Black Vote are two organisations trying desperately to restore politicians credibility amongst groups of people who have never had many illusions in voting. Both try to model themselves on voter registration drives in America but there is a crucial difference that is deliberately overlooked. Black voter registration in the 50s and 60s was a part of the civil rights movement at a time when attempting to register meant standing up to the local racist establishment, the cops and the klan. Here both campaigns are at best merely encouraging people to obey the law, at worst they are a cynical attempt to build a constituency in return for a post election pay off. Collaborators with either should be told where to get off.

Not voting, being against all the parties, against bourgeois democracy etc. is all very well but as a campaign seems a bit limited. Campaigns themselves are a bit pointless. The AEA may encourage some resistance during the election campaign but this doesnt get us anywhere. People will reject elections when they see no need for them. While it is true that there is a huge level of resentment against politicians and the major parties, not voting is a bit meaningless. The action that anarchists believe in are far more than a mere rejection of ballots. Direct action at work and where we live and building solid practical useful groups and organisations are far more important.

The election will also see widespread attempts at activity by the BNP. They are attempting to stand in 50 seats to qualify for a party political broadcast. Opposition to these scum should not be allowed to be manipulated into becoming protection for Labour party rallies. There seems little to be gained by protecting the people that will be sending the cops against us for the next 5 years. Fascist activities will obviously be opposed. AFA have recently set up a bust fund and cheques made out to AFA and marked Cable Street fund can be sent to AFA at BM 1734, London WC1 3XX.

Anti election stickers are available through *Black Flag*. Send us stamps or donations. Any cheques should be made out to London Class War.

Anti Election Alliance: BM 6577. London WC1N 3XX

anarchism & syndicalism

it will fall to the syndicalist movement to open the eyes of society towards the tasks owing to the producers of all wealth. It is the only movement which will show to thinking people a way out of the cul-de-sac into which the present development of capitalism has given our generation.

It goes without saying that anarchists have never imagined that it was they who had provided the syndicalist movement with its understanding of its tasks with regard to the reorganisation of society. Never have they absurdly claimed to be the leaders of a great intellectual movement leading humanity in the direction of its progressive evolution. But what we can claim is to have recognised right from the beginning the immense importance of those ideas which today constitute the main aims of Syndicalism, ideas which in Britain have been developed by Godwin, Hodgkin, Grey and their successors, and in France by Proudhon: The idea that workers' organisations for production, distribution, and exchange, must take the place of existing capitalist exploitation and the state. And that it is the duty and the task of the workers' organisations to work out the new form of society.

Neither of these two fundamental ideas are our invention; nor anyone else's. Life itself has dictated them to nineteenth century civilisation. It is now our duty to put them into reality. But we are proud that we understood and defended them in those dark years when social democratic politicians and pseudo-philosophies trampled them underfoot, and we are proud that we stand true to them, today as then.

gandalf defeats the forces of darkness

CHARGES AGAINST ALF group press officer Robin Webb have been thrown out leaving the cops with a distinctly shaky case against five others who they are trying to fit up with conspiracy charges. The other 5, 4 editors of *Green Anarchist* and the ALF supporters group newsletter editor, were committed for trial. The cops admit that without Webb their "conspiracy" falls apart completely. They are appealing the decision and will try and have charges reinstated at a hearing at the High Court in London at Easter. The committal failed as Robin had already been tried on the same evidence. The accusations are that by printing reports of sabotage the 6 were conspiring to incite others to commit it.

Contact : Gandalf Defendants Campaign, PO Box 66, Stevenage, SG1 2TR. [tel 01438 746372]

reviews

The Case against Searchlight

"Searchlight for Beginners" by Larry O'Hara. Phoenix Press , December 1996, 32 pages, £2.00

This is O'Haras case against Searchlight, the "anti-fascist" magazine and its editor Gerry Gable, in which he argues both are "state assets". It is much better than his previous efforts, mainly because it's short and so sticks more to the point.

The most damning indictment against Gable remains the "Gable Memorandum", uncovered by Duncan Cambell in the late 1970's, which shows Gable passed info on fellow journalists to Special Branch. O'Hara expands on this theme by following the Searchlight campaigns covering, in particular, the histories of "Column 88" and more recently "Combat 18" and their bewildering switches from "paramilitary nazi outfit" to "state sponsored honey trap".

O'Hara still tends to speculate at every opportunity and his habit of automatically equating "dodgy person" with "MI5 asset" is unconvincing and irritating. But as a whole the case against Searchlight has weight. If you haven't read his previous stuff then this is even better. Deserves an answer.

AC

they will never get us all!

Writings and Poetry by anarchist prisoner Harold H. Thompson. [£1.50 from Huddersfield ABC. c/o 17-21 Chapel Street, Bradford, BD15DT, UK]

Like John Perotti, Harold Thompson is a jailhouse lawyer and activist behind bars. This collection of poems and articles has prison struggles at its centre linked to class struggle anarchism beyond the prison walls. The articles deal mostly with the role of prisons and the judicial system in capitalism and the importance of support and contact with prisoners. Theres also a piece about gun control: against it. This is one of the strongest and clearest statements of the importance of having links with prisoners and supporting prison resistance that I have read. The poems are rather different from AKs angry lifestyle collection, more like distilled class hatred blended with a determination to win.

Write to Harold H. Thompson #93992, TURNEY CENTER INDUSTRIAL PRISON, ROUTE 1, ONLY, TN 37140-9709, USA.

News from the Kate Sharpley Library

THE CATALOGUING of the British Isles' voluminous Anarchist archive is trundling ahead, so that the collection of English language pamphlets is now on a database, and the books will be following after. Those who've been waiting for these catalogues with bated breath can get a regular update on that, and learn more about Anarchist history, in KSL (the Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library), which has resumed quarterly publication after a spell of "exciting irregularity". Issue No 6 (with the "lost Anarchists" spot, an account of Kate Sharpley, and more) is now available for 50p + SAE from:
Kate Sharpley Library c/o BM Hurricane
London WC1N 3XX

Also in this issue is a list of KSL publications, and future publishing projects. We would recommend that anyone clearing out their cupboards of libertarian material should get in touch with KSL to make sure that historical gems are not lost forever.

Regular readers of *Black Flag* should not need reminding that unless we know and control our own history it will be taken and used for their own purposes by academic mercenaries and their allies. The Kate Sharpley Library is a vital part of the fight to prevent our history (as a friend put it) "being re-written to take account of nobodies".

announcements from the meltzer press

TWO MORE SPIRAL bound volumes from the new anarchist imprint. First there is Stuart Christie's study of the FAI and it's role over the crucial years from 1927 to the defeat of the Spanish revolution. *We The Anarchists* will be reviewed in our next issue, and is available for £12.95. The next issue from TMP will be the first English version of Volume 1 of Jose Peirats classic *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution*. Plagiarised by academics, the unavailability of this text in English has allowed many so called scholars to make up the history of the Spanish movement as they saw fit. TMP plan to bring out all of this work. Volume 1 costs £12.95 and both are available from:

The Meltzer Press,
PO Box 35, Hastings TN34 2UX
e-mail:0104.1406@compuserve.com

late news...

Class War is Dead?

Blair is a socialist?
The ruling class have given up?
No! No! No!

AT THE@ Bookfair in October 1996, the Class War Federaation circulated a leaflet that said "watch this space". HArdly news for comrades with their ear to the ground. Since then the rumour mill has been running wild with groups as diverse as Freedom and Red Action reporting our demise - without bothering to check with us in a typical sectarian manner. The following statement is an edited version of a letter sent to all of CWs bulk Order Subscribers in early November 96, Issue 73 will be a fuller statement.

Issue 73 of *Class War* will not be out until April/May 1997. It will be a SPECIAL ISSUE, possibly the last, at least in its current form.

Evolution The CWF is reviewing its "raison d'etre". We are looking inwards and outwards. At the way we work; the changes in the capitalist global economy; the changes within and effects upon our own class. Times change and Class War has to evolve too (we are aware we are not the only ones with the courage to question our own existance). Working class resistance has to learn new, and re-learn old, forms of struggle. From riot to insurrection is a huge step.

Issue 73 - The Nasty One (Why is the revolutionary movement so marginal?) This one off special will have 20 + pages. It will not have its typical contents, nor its normal irreverent tone, but will include the following:

•an open letter directed at the anarchist / libertarian movement and our readers.

•honest evaluation and history of Class War.

•why people engage in political struggle, what makes them tick, what we want at the end of it.

•articles on the likes of prisoners and prisoner solidarity work; internationalism; changing face of industrual struggles; anti-election action; and more.

What Are We Going To Do After? The CWF will be looking to hold a conference later in 1997, in which we are asking like-minded groups / individuals to become involved. Until then, the CWF will continue its day to day activities, and network for this conference. Issue 73 is part of the process, we welcome responses to the paper and any contributions to the direction our class, our wider movement, and the CWF should be moving towards.

Whatever the outcome of the next few months, the struggle continues, and all individuals involved in the CWF will continue this struggle in one way or another. We urge all who have supported and been enthused by Class War over the years to do the same, and to carefully consider what we have to say in Issue 73.

Our discussions over the last months already involve many who are not current members of the CWF. WE want to widen this process. All comrades are invited to send written contributions to : The CWF, c/o Nat SEC, PO Box 3241, Birmingham, B8 3DP

union drops hillingdon dispute

UNISON's National Executive Council's Industrial Action Committee decided on 8th January - against the wishes of the strikers - to recommend acceptance of a cash offer worth a total of £250,000 and to drop UNISON's campaign for their reinstatement by Pall Mall. As part of this arrangement UNISON has agreed no longer to support any of the strikers who wish to continue with industrial tribunal complaints against Pall Mall. In addition Unison get recognition rights with Pall Mall. The strikers have set up their own fund and are carrying on.

Send donations to :

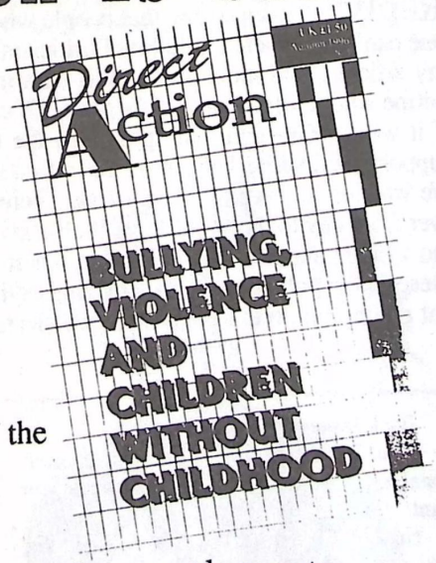
Hill Strikers Support Campaign
c/o Counc. Wally Kennedy
Hillingdon Civic Centre
Uxbridge, Mddx

Direct Action is back!

DA, the organ of the anarcho-syndicalist Solidarity Federation, has been relaunched in a magazine format.

Issue no.2 out soon!

Subs are:
£12 UK supporters or £15 rest of the world for one year.



Alternatively, send a large s.a.e for a sample copy to
DA, PO Box 1095, SHEFFIELD S2 4YR

letters....

Dear *Black Flag*,

I am writing in reponse to the latest copy of your magazine, which according to your editorial is improving. I don't agree. Firstly I thought that the writers of *Black Flag* had more sense than to support middle class single interest groups, such as the Freedom Network, Advance Party, and Reclaim the Streets. These groups have previously proved the extremes they will go to in order to enforce non-violence: ie Advance party spraying people with green paint or the Freedom Network sitting down around anyone being violent in order to grass up people on demonstrations. They stand against violence and will work with the police to achieve this. Yet praise is given to these groups with regards to their support of the Liverpool Dockers Strike, whilst the "left' are laughed at because their tactics are stupid- 'the dim left' as you say. I also hate the left but are you saying that picketing should not involve standing at gates and physically stopping entry but by non-violent tactics; singing, dancing, sitting down, shouting no violence and d-locking each other to gates? If so get with it, these groups are an embarassment, they've nothing to do with class politics and are dangerous to our class.

Secondly, I think that some of the articles are poor, in particular, the two page article that looks into class and anarchism, reviewing a pamphlet, *Educating who about what- the circled A and its paprasites*. The writer explains what will be discussed in the article but then fails to actually discuss this! Instead there is a large rant that has little to do with the pamphlet (which I have read), the writer is obviously confused about class, as shown in his attempted definition which rather stupidly compares the powers of teachers and swimming pool attendants! Yes mate, getting chucked out of a swimming pool must have given the attendant an immense feeling of power, no doubt he is out abusing his power over working class peopole right now. He goes on to explain how a lady wishes to be middle class, talks crap about rioters and about irrelevant issues and then finally relates to the booklet by saying that large proportions of it are on praising pop band Pulp and criticising anarcho band Chumbawumba, this is not the case, a few pages out of 50 odd maybe. There is more to this pamphlet, it is a shame that the person who reviewed it has gone to such length to write a crap article which diverts away from the real issues in the pamphlet. The reason for this is obvious to me; the writer knows (s)he is one of the 90% of anarchists that the pamphlet claims are a joke, and that the writer does not want any disturbance / anyone to rock the boat within the anarchist 'movement', as (s)he in reality doesn't want change. Whilst Albert Meltzer is continually praised throughout your magazine let's not forget that he was a genuine anarchist and woudn't approve of the 'naughty, rebellious but deliciously safe anarchist movement and press' that we sadly have. Please get someone to review the real issues contained in the pamphlet.

Yours
Mat, Leeds.

Reply: It's a shame that people who put out a pamphlet attacking almost everyone can't take even a mild bit of criticism. What you're really complaining about is in my article I said more about class than in this pamphlet. The pamphlet doesn't even define who it thinks are middle class! Of course we believe in mass picketing, but only if it works. Our editorial applauded the move of Reclaim the Streets and others to support the dockers because it was a first step out of fluffy politics into the real world. We want to see more of it, not less. There is a danger that the protest mentality takes over from day to day resistance. If all class struggle anarchists do is sit on the sidelines and whinge that's what will happen. There is a debate to be had about class, and we're interested in publishing stuff which takes this debate further. I hope we get some letters that attempt to do that. MH for the collective

Dear Black Flag,

Thanks for plugging Industrial Society and Its Future, although you will see from our introduction that whilst our support for FC is indeed "enthusiastic", it is not unqualified. We specifically criticised "all its reductionism and machismo", though we don't think that means its author "isn't playing with a full deck". Elsewhere we note FC is elitist to argue for propagandising the revolution - this sources back to Ellul's far superior Technological Society - and contradictory to say this and that it will come spontaneously from subcultures of refusal and revolt ("welfare leeches") in reaction to the dehumanisations imposed by the MegaMachine. We are glad to see 13th Monkey finds FC's critique of technology and leftism "quite reasonable". Granting this, the best way to criticise FC's P targets and tactics is to suggest better ones - not to neutralise the critique by denying it praxis. Most groups have failed to cope with Industrial Society and Its Future because its approach is more radical than their own. We recommend Feral Fauns critique of FC, Fixed Ideas and Nail Bombs (see GA 45), because it criticises the manifesto as ideology - not as "crime" or as a threat to vested interests and cosy niches - and therefore presents a more radical revolutionary model than FC does.

We are writing to you now for "the man turned in by his brother". Ted Kaczynski could not have made it to Oakland from Lincoln, Montana, on 28 April 1995 by coach and so could not have posted the bomb that killed Gilbert Murray. Any evidence suggesting he is the Unabomber must therefore have been planted by an FBI desperate to catch anyone as "America's most wanted" before he disappeared without trace, leaving them with nothing but trashed credibility after an 18 year long search. Even if Kaczynski is the Unabomber, he should be supported as an anarchist political prisoner because that is exactly what the American state want to execute him as. Write letters of support to: Ted Kaczynski c/o Quin Denvir, 10th floor, 801 I Street, Sacremento CA 95814, USA. For more information write to the Ted Kaczynski Defence Campaign, BCM 1715, London WC1N 3XX.

Yours for the destruction of Civilisation, Oxford GAs

Back Issues Available

Send 31p in stamps (UK) or an International reply coupon for 100g for each one you want:

No.203: Squatting; Nigeria; Searchlight; Anti-fascism & Racism; Sex; Red Vienna 1934: Police: Equal opportunities. No.204: the Zapatistas; Tower Hamlets 9; UCH occupation; 1 in 12 club; Terrorism; Abortion; Asturias 1934. No.206: Mumia Abu-Jamal: Lorenzo Komboa Ervin interview; pornography; the middle class; Nepal; French stay-in strikes 34-36; arrests and trials in Italy. No.207: Bangladesh Garment Workers Union; JJ's strike; Squatting after the CJA; Dockers; Voting; Greek news; sexuality; No.208: Hillingdon strike; Dunblane; Albert Meltzer; ex-Yugoslavia; Land is Ours; Huntsabbing; the British SS; Toxins; McLibel; Liverpool dockers. No.209: Women of the Waterfront; MOVE; Italian social centres; the JSA; Ceremony and funerals; Hackney Council and the black middle class; anarchy on the internet; GANDALF 6; Paris commune.

contacts list...

If you want to be included, drop us a line.

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Solidarity Federation (anarcho-syndicalists) PO Box 29, SWPDO, MANCHESTER M15 5HW (tel: 0161-231 8177)

Anarchist-Communist Federation c/o 84B Whitechapel High St, LONDON E1 7QX

Class War Federation , PO Box 3241, Birmingham B8 3DP

INDUSTRIAL

Education Workers Network - SolFed
Communications Workers Network - SolFed Both PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW

Transport Workers Network - SolFed PO Box 73, Norwich NR3 1QD

Public Service Workers Network - SolFed PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE

Industrial Workers of the World - British Isles, F.Lee, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 1WB

LOCAL GROUPS

SCOTLAND

Dundee Anarchist Group, Martyn Quinn, Flat 59, Tay Mills Flats, 23 Brown St, Dundee
Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh c/o Peace & Justice Centre, St Johns Church, Princes St Edinburgh EH2
Glasgow Anarchists, PO Box 1008, Glasgow G42 8AA

WALES

Cardiff SF, PO Box 676, Cardiff CF1 9US
IWW-Aberystwyth, PO Box 17, Aberystwyth, Dyfed (tel: 01970-624590)

NORTH ENGLAND

Bradford 1 in 12 Club, 21-23 Albion St, Bradford BD1 2LI Tel: 01274 734160
Leeds Anarchist group, PO Box HP 115, Leeds LS6 1UN
Liverpool Anarchists PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP
Preston SolFed, PO Box 384, Preston PR1 6PQ
Sheffield Anarchists, PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY
Tyneside Anarchist Group, PO Box 1TA, Newcastle NE99 1TA

SOUTH EAST

East Kent Anarchists, c/o Canterbury Centre, St Alphege Lane, Canterbury
Haringey Solidarity Group, PO Box 2474 London N8 0HW
Hounslow Anarchists c/o PO Box 87, Hampton, Middlesex TW13 3TF
Oxford Solidarity Action, c/o BM BCM 1715 London WC1N 3XX
Red & Black Club (S.E.London) c/o BM Hurricane, LONDON WC1N 3XX
South Herts SolFed PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW

EAST ANGLIA

Cambridge Anarchists, Box A, Arjuna, 12 Mill Rd, Cambridge
Norwich & Norfolk Solidarity Centre, Unit 13, Muspole Workshops, Muspole St, Norwich NR3 1DJ

SOUTH WEST

North Somerset, PO Box 1980, Radstock BA3 3FH
South Bristol Anarchists, PO Box 1076, Bristol BS99 1WF
Write c/o Black Flag for contacts in Plymouth

IRELAND

Organise!, PO BOX 505, Belfast BT11 9EE
Ainriail, PO BOX 505, Belfast BT11 9EE
Workers Solidarity Movement, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8

OTHER CONTACTS

Advisory Service for Squatters 2 St Pauls Rd London N1 (tel: 0171-359 8814)
Anarchist Black Cross (prisoner support) 121 Railton Rd, London SE24
Legal Defence & Monitoring Group, BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX
Kate Sharpley Library, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX

Anarcho-Quiz

@nswers

1. It is the process where tiny particles of black melanin, the pigment in skin (the amount of which determines one's skin colour to the naked eye), reflect the light. This makes the skin look blue and is most commonly seen in certain species of monkey's testicles. I'm sure it has nothing to do with would-be BNP führer John Tyndall and his bizarre theories on race and skin colour, though it could apply to the BNP leadership's response whenever they meet any militant anti-fascists.

2. The Finnish consul, a Swede who was sympathetic, arranged for Finnish citizenship papers for anyone the union sent to him.

3. To put your head in the gas oven. Carbon monoxide, which poisons by preventing the blood vessels take up oxygen, used to be used as domestic gas, it was manufactured from coal. With the exploitation of North Sea gas, methane, the only reliable way to act out the phrase would be to strike a match at the same time. In a testament to the internal combustion engine, many people now achieve the same effect by running a hose from their car exhaust into the car, thus dying of carbon monoxide poisoning.

4. In the State of Chihuahua in Mexico, about 200km south of El Paso on the US border, is Ricardo Flores Magón, named for the leading anarchist theorist of the Mexican revolution.

5. Hairdresser Vidal Sassoon.

NO WAR

Between Nations

NO PEACE

Between Classes